

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY
OF A
FALLEN "CHRIST"

BY
A. J. HALBLEIB

— GIVEN TO —

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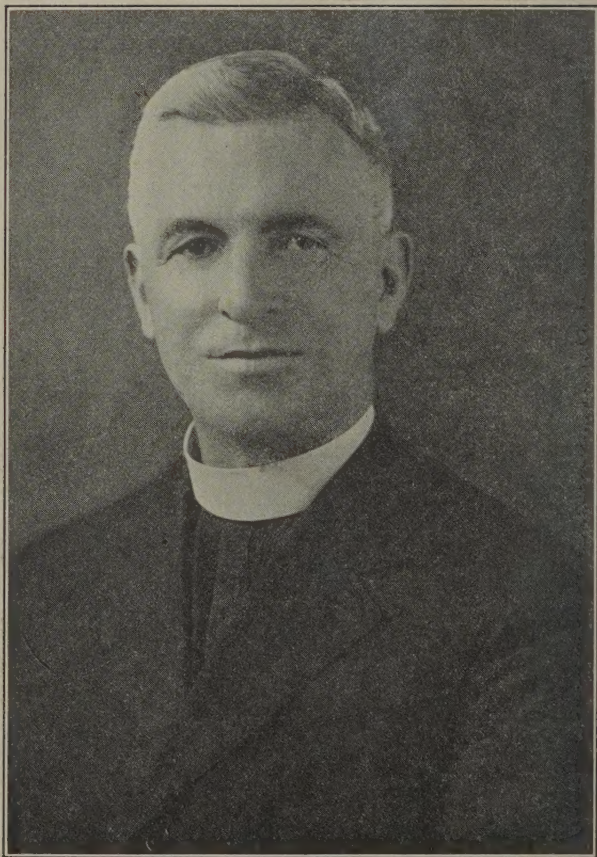
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THE AUTHOR AS THE "REVEREND FATHER"

The Autobiography

OF A

Fallen "Christ"

By

A. J. HALBLEIB

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DEDICATION

To all of those good sisters, brothers, priests and other Catholic teachers who in the course of his more plastic years long and ardently labored to give him so extremely different an idea of the Roman Catholic Priesthood from that which during a full score of years within its fold he has now most sorrowfully obtained—to all of these this modest volume, dealing only with absolute facts as the writer saw them, is regretfully dedicated by

THE AUTHOR.

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PREFACE

More than once has it been said that he who hesitates is lost. If this be a rule with no very striking exceptions then indeed will the fate of the author of this little work be worse than stupendous, tragic enough as it has already been. For long has he hesitated, and most seriously and often hesitated, before at last launching forth this unusual if not really unique volume of his into a world already too much burdened with the sad tales of fallen men and women, to add to them his own heart-wrenching true life-story of a Fallen "Christ."

Whatever, though, may be the strictures heaped upon such a book now that it has at last gone forth, its humble writer knows full well that in it he has but given an absolutely true narrative of actual occurrences, even though he has not told all, or even the worst; and that he has tried, at least, to do all for a good purpose.

Nearly thirty-one long years of most strenuous struggle have now passed since the first of the germs which at length caused the final and complete downfall of the "Christ" herein written of entered the writer's soul. Moreover, nearly seventeen months of most careful consideration passed between the actual occurrences of the climacteric recorded in chapters XV, XVI and XVII, and the writing of the first line of the first chapter of the book.

And then, too, more than a year of further hesitation and prayerful struggle went by between the completion of its last chapter and the writing of this Preface. That is, the hesitation and struggle have been as prayerful as one in the unfortunate writer's indescribably painful

frame of mind could make it, and which has now so long made even his most ardent efforts at prayer—prayer for himself, at least—just seem to freeze his heart and to sicken his soul.

Many and various have been the causes of all of this most serious hesitation. Not the least among them, and especially very lately, has been the author's absolute and almost unconquerable repugnance to doing anything which might even remotely seem like attacking the dead.

Then there was his inborn and long lingering aversion to being guilty of the least thing which might in any way weaken the pleasure-giving faith of any of the living, and thus deprive them of that staff upon which they leaned most heavily and pleasurably whilst traversing the rough and uphill path of life; and there was his great reluctance to doing anything which might bring odium, and even Catholic ostracism upon those nearest and dearest to him upon earth.

What makes the publication of this book just now most particularly trying to the writer of it is the fact that one of the pivotal, if not chief causative actors in this true and tragical tale of a "Fallen Christ" has but recently passed out of this life (in January, 1927).

Through a curious bit of the sometimes strange irony of fate this man went forth into eternity most pitifully; and seemingly mocked by fate itself. He went forth in the earthly possession of the mere shadow, instead of the actual substance of that which he once seemed, at least, to crave, to strive, and even to sacrifice much for—an archbishopric. In other words, he died practically only a nominal archbishop, instead of retaining his health of body and of mind sufficiently to become a real and an active one.

And all that can be said in extenuation of thus refer-

ring to him and his works in this book—such a book—and at this time, is the fact, and the often most patent fact, that “The evil that men do lives after them,” and that its consequences are not interred with their bones.

Too much danger to the pleasure-giving Catholic faith of the living will, the writer now feels, after more mature deliberation, be greatly lessened through the crafty influence of the priesthood even before the name of this book finds its way, as doubtless it soon will, to the pages of the “Index Expurgatorius,” or to the catalogue of all of those many books which Roman Catholics are just not allowed to read under pain of “mortal sin”—sin which they believe can send the soul to Hell for all eternity—regardless of how much absolute truth these books may contain about priests, bishops and other persons or things Roman Catholic.

Another consideration which gave the author long and most serious pause was the thought that the publication of his book at last would most surely bring odium if not actual ostracism from more than one very pious Catholic source; and not only upon himself, but upon those nearest and dearest to him.

Were it a mere question of bearing such things all alone the burden would be comparatively light, though painful enough. But merely to think of saddling the least of it upon relatives and friends makes it all well-nigh intolerable.

However, to those nearest and dearest, and who feel that they will suffer much because of this book, the writer would say only: Read all of the book. Then read it again, including this preface; and after that pause and reflect—and “Attend and see if your sorrow be like unto my sorrow,” now so long and quietly borne. Moreover, ask yourselves just what you would have done under the very same circumstances; and how soon done it.

A final consideration which caused the writer to hesitate long and most seriously was the fact that in this book much has been done (or at least deliberately attempted) by mere insinuation which any honorable writer would instinctively prefer to do with absolute directness. However, since within the Catholic Church so much is done with so great cleverness born of intelligence and long practice and experience—and constantly done to keep the least hint of pretty serious things from the “faithful,” or the common garden variety of the laity, little else except insinuation was at times open to him. Even a passing consideration of the matter of chapters XV and XVIII and of others will give the reader at least some idea of just why the author has indulged so much in insinuation and left his reader to indulge in deduction now and then.

It is the ardent hope of the writer of this absolutely true tale of a “Fallen Christ” that at least a few of his readers will become sufficiently interested in what is herein written to endeavor to check up upon his record as a layman, a clerical student, a priest and a pastor, and thus ascertain for themselves just how much circumstantial evidence if nothing stronger can really be obtained. Sufficient data with which to start such an investigation may, for a limited time, at least, be had upon a printed card by sending a self-addressed and stamped envelope to the publishers of this book with a request for the same.

Any constructive criticism based upon such investigation, or any helpful hints sent to the author through his publishers will be gratefully received, and may be reflected in future editions of this book or in others upon kindred subjects.

ADD TO PREFACE

So very, very, strong a hold did real love for and faith in the Catholic Church and her priesthood once have upon the writer, and so really anxious was he still for their return that even after this book was completed, and after the foregoing preface had been written the author resolved in the name of God to make one, at least one, more real and most sincere effort to see if anything at all could be done to restore some little of his once vital and most pleasurable faith in the Catholic Church and in its priesthood.

To assist him in his attempt at the restoration of his faith the writer did the most natural and logical thing for a Catholic priest. He tried to make a "retreat." Now a "retreat" is for Catholic priests, brothers and sisters and others something like what a "mission" or revival is for the laity. It is supposed to renew or revive the tired and lagging spirit, and to send the priest or other religious out with greatly enlivened faith and zeal.

This retreat which the author started was given at one of the foremost and most widely known Catholic institutions of learning of this country during the week of June 20th-26th, 1927. It was conducted, moreover, by a specially chosen and quite well known Jesuit priest.

At this retreat matters went on fairly well during the first day, and there seemed, at times to be at least, a faint glimmer of hope. This, however, died an awful death on the evening of the second day—and right in the main chapel, in front of the altar of the Blessed Sacrament! For right there the "Retreat Master," or the good Reverend Jesuit Father who was "giving," or preaching the "retreat," or revival, told a little more about priests than the writer was prepared to learn just then, instead of telling more about the things of God which his poor troubled soul at that time so craved to hear.

Just how much of this affected all of the other sixty-odd priests and the Bishop there the writer knows not, though he heard one say at breakfast the next morning that it was a good thing that the sermon the night before was not broad-cast to the laity, or that there were no "Kluxers" listening in.

After expatiating at some length in this now memorable discourse upon the escapades of priests, which varied all the way from sheer and continued laziness to habitual drunkenness and drug-addiction, the good and very pious, Jesuit Father indicated in no uncertain words just how really easy it may be at times for a priest to carry on "illicit commerce," as he termed it, with a nun in the church itself; and that, too, behind the very altar of the Blessed Sacrament! There, IN SUCH A PLACE, this "illicit commerce" between nun and priest would, it is presumed, be least suspected by the laity who, in the simplicity of their good and decent hearts might be willing to do almost anything short of murdering one who would even hint of the possibility of such a thing.

It might be remarked here that the good Jesuit Father's use of the word "illicit" in connection with this "commerce" between priest and nun there in the church itself was not without its force to the writer who is at least somewhat acquainted with the philosophical distinctions between some words, and with their real use in Roman Catholic theology and canon law.

Be all that as it may, though, the author will never again be able to think, even, of a cassock, the long, loose and rather flowing garment which a priest so often wears, or to think of a nun's "habit" or dress which is also long, loose and roomy, without recalling just how well they both can adapt themselves to certain things; and how, like the cloak of charity they can, at least, cover a few

if not a multitude of sins, and possibly, at any rate, some little "illicit commerce."

Verily, verily, have the author's eyes at last been opened wide to much that he might, at least, have missed by not associating more with and learning more from priests. (See chapter XIV, paragraph 10.)

Tightly, most tightly and at last, though, has his heart now been closed to the Catholic Church and its priesthood, which is its fruit. And what finally did it; what put on the last straw at that critical time when his soul craved a revival of the faith, was that learned and experienced Jesuit Father's illuminating exposition of the interesting possibilities of "illicit commerce" between priest and nun in the silence and secrecy of the church, and perhaps during long "visits" to the "Blessed Sacrament," when a priest's cassock, and a nun's "habit" can play so important a part.

All of this just makes the author wonder whether if he ever needs a "housekeeper" after he leaves the priesthood and cannot with propriety then live alone with an unattached female; whether after complying with all of the laws of the state and his country and legitimately marrying a "housekeeper"—whether this will be looked upon by his fellow-priests as being in the eyes of Catholic theologians actually unlawful—or also only "illicit."

* * * * *

But two poor fragments of consolation now remain to the agonized author as his true tale of a "Fallen Christ" goes reluctantly forth at last into an uncertain and probably largely hostile world. The first of these arises from the fact that he has most conscientiously employed, and so long employed, each and every means within his ken or power to regain the consoling faith which once was so happily his; and that he has ceased only when he is at

last most clearly and most firmly and fully convinced that this is now impossible; and that to continue longer in the priesthood and pretend to be and to believe what for him is no longer possible would but make him a thing vile and despicable alike to himself as to everyone else with any real sense of honor and common decency.

The second source of consolation now flows from a consideration of the fact that just so long as he remained within the pale of the priesthood, and even during the time necessarily consumed in making proper preparations for leaving it, he did not, knowingly at least, do or say anything which could weaken the faith of even one soul.

On the contrary, and thank God, in his endeavor to preserve as long as possible the often consoling faith of his poor little flock the author endured no little anguish of soul and even agony of body at the hands (or tongues, rather) of some of his very own who knew not what they did, and who just could not without injury to their precious faith be told then just what were the real causes behind the gradual decline and the three times almost total collapse of the health of their pastor. More than one of these will probably never learn these things; at least not through the medium of this book, which for them will be "banned and barred—forbidden fare," as "practical Catholics."

Until this book was ready for publication and the writer had handed in his resignation as pastor and priest but two persons had any real inkling as to its existence and real nature; and they only through force of unavoidable circumstances. These two faithful and indefatigable souls were much about the author in the capacity of volunteer amanuenses when a rather vast volume of labor amid illness and other difficulties made them

indispensable. And to them was finally committed the typing of the manuscript which sixteen months ago was written in long hand during a period of convalescence from rather severe illness at the beginning of which the author actually fell at his post of duty. To these two the writer owes an everlasting debt of gratitude for their invaluable labor and loyalty when so many others about, who could have no true inkling as to real causes, seemed so cruel and worse than heartless.

It is with no little diffidence that the long and sorely tried author presumes to say that he has more than one motive in thus publishing this modest volume.

Of course, there is that quite evident one that since he just cannot remain a mere sacerdotal parasite upon, and easily extract a quite comfortable living, if not more, from the Roman Catholic "faithful"—as almost any priest can do—he simply must make a living for himself with his pen, since he knows no other way.

Entirely aside from that, though, and from his desire to inform those interested just why he left the priesthood, and took so long to do it, there is another and far more important motive; and that is to try to do some real good—ultimate good at least.

For ever after all of his most sad and very involuntary disillusionment about the stern realities of the Roman Catholic Priesthood the writer still preserves so keen a love for, and so strong a hope in the true Church Catholic that he trusts that this little work of his may do at least some real good in the end for the very ones whom he has had to attack in it.

It is his most ardent hope, moreover, that in the interest of this same real good at least a few more sincere and fearless souls may, through this little book of his, be prompted to make at least some investigations for them-

selves, and to endeavor to take such steps as prudence and true Christianity may prompt them—and especially with regard to those things which prevent too many of the “Other Christs” from being more like the real, true, humble and loving Christ, even if they do not always tend to make them a real and constant and a widespread peril.

Not the least of these dangerous things may be that un-Christlike form of selfishness which displays itself all too often in that grasping and ever more grasping personal ambition and vanity within the Catholic Priesthood and Episcopacy which cries out louder and louder, and even at the very altar of God Himself, as well as elsewhere—and cries out so for the “Almighty Dollar,” and the power of the dollar.

An added peril to this peril of perils is the fact that this is done not so much for the good of suffering souls and ailing bodies of men in the more needy sections, but to pile up showy shrine upon shrine upon valuable and untaxed land, where they are not too much needed even for the pomp and ceremony of the Catholic Church.

More than once does all of this seem, at least, to be done not merely to flatter the vanity of some pompous “Other Christ,” but to further his ambition to wear the royal purple of a bishopric, and to wield its power over others for further and further advancement of self-financially as well as ecclesiastically.

That the humble author of this modest book is not entirely alone in seeing some of these things can be easily proved by anyone who can procure a copy of the November, 1924, issue of the Ecclesiastical Review, of Philadelphia, Pa., a publication for priests, which the unsophisticated laity as a rule know nothing of, and could not always profit much by since a considerable section of it is

quite often in Latin. There, under the title of "Lay Critics of the Clergy," he may note that at least one other Catholic newspaper man (if correctly quoted by an "Ex-Prelate") has had sufficient courage to talk up and say that it simply "sickens a man to see the absorption of priests in these things (money-getting and self-advancement), and at the same time to note the womanish vanity with which some of them display their purple and precious stones right in the face of the poorly clad and hungry people (from whom no little money is cunningly extracted) as though they were the lords of creation" (and not the professed followers of the humble, unselfish and humanity-loving Jesus Christ).

It may be noted in that same article how this Catholic newspaper man pays his respects to the worldly, and gambling, and luxury-loving and quiet political-pull-seeking "Other Christs," and how some of those "Higher Ups" seem to fear the fearless Catholic with the "gift of the pen."

More than once has the author of this rather unusual Biography, whilst still within the pale of the Priesthood, with pen and voice fought this un-Christlike thing among the "Other Christs," and paid the penalty; in part, at least.

What he may now have to pay, and pay in ways probably inconceivable to non-Catholics, will not, he hopes, be entirely in vain. Most certainly it will not be thus in vain if, like the one poor feeble little rain-drop in the fable who gave himself and all that he had just merely to set an example to others of how to start a much needed and life-preserving shower, the humble writer may be able only to encourage others to try really to "start something," which may do real even if only ultimate good to the very Priesthood itself, as well as for the honor

and glory of God, and for the long-suffering Catholic citizens of this glorious Country of ours, who have had to endure no little needless hardship because of some of their priests and others.

It may not be entirely amiss, moreover, even for such a one as the plain-spoken and unpolitic author to do, or rather to attempt to do, such a thing just now as another Presidential election comes on apace, and just as the best of really true American men and women are so seriously considering the real advisability of having or of not having in the chair of the Presidency of these glorious and powerful United States of America one, who, whilst able to wield there, the Chief Command of our Army and Navy and their vast potentialities, and to enjoy so many other prerogatives, is himself at the very self-same time under the dominion of Roman Catholic priest, bishop and Pope who can, at least, be vain, selfish and ambitious—and just simply must be under their dominion, or cease to be a Practical Catholic.

CHAPTER I

A VERY YOUNG PRIEST

Just as far back as I can remember anything of my earliest childhood days, and every time I try to, I instinctively recall the fact that right from the time I first realized that such a thing was indeed humanly possible, I wanted, I craved to become a priest—a “Roman Catholic” priest. With all of my childish might I then prayed and prayed to become a priest, “a priest of the living God”; and that idea became a long-enduring obsession with me.

It seems now, at the age of 52, to have been but as yesterday that I first saw a priest, and saw that priest officiating in a Catholic church. As not much more than a tot I had been taken to St. Mary’s church in the city of X, my birthplace. My dear old grandfather had taken me there to what I now know was a “Solemn High Mass.”

How well I recall today yet that everything in that church then impressed me most forcibly. The, to me, immense size of the place; the beautiful altar; the pictures on the wall; the gorgeous vestments of the priest and his attendants; the grand singing, and the entrancing and haunting and haunting music—and so many other things; how well I remember!

Among the “other things” which come back so easily, and floating so lightly and clearly over the green fields of memory are the questions upon questions which I, in my then superexuberant ecstasy began, and continued for a time, to ask out aloud there in that church. How clearly and forcibly comes back the fact, too, that I was told

again and again, and finally rather emphatically, to keep quiet, and to say nothing but my prayers, and thus "talk to God," as that was "God's house," and He wanted every person in it to talk to Him alone—and to talk in a whisper!

At that tender age I knew only a few most simple prayers, and I knew that real praying meant actually "talking to God." Therefore I then began to whisper those prayers over and over again, looking and looking all around, and listening intently meanwhile, as well as wondering how even God could hear me with all of that fine music and singing going on.

How well I recall the silence in that dear old church when that music and the singing ceased at last, and when a priest slowly and solemnly arose, and with measured tread climbed the rather high stairway to the pulpit, which was then away up against the wall on the left side of the church as one faced the altar. He first looked scarey to me with his long brown beard.

With what childish awe I regarded that priest up there in his long flowing sacred garb! Having been told that that was God's house, I, through some process of child-logic soon reasoned that that priest there, talking so loud—bellowing it at first seemed to me—must be God Himself, to be able to go away up so high, and to shout and to wave his hands, and to bang his fists down on that pulpit the way he did there in God's own house in which I, for one, had to keep so quiet—and so long quiet.

How I observed that priest's long, loose and flowing robes! How sadly and disappointingly was I impressed with the fact that he wore what seemed to me then to be a dress—a woman's dress—when I had thought all of the time before that God was a man! And my! how very happy I was the next day when I happened to meet that

same priest dressed in ordinary citizens' clothes, and could run in great glee and haste to tell my grandfather how supremely glad I was to learn that God was a man after all—on week-days at least—as I had that afternoon in town seen him going down the street; going down with pants on—with real, “sure-enough” pants on, too!

Though I went to church and to Mass a number of times after that, and up to the beginning of my days in a Catholic school, I never quite fully grasped the idea that a priest was after all a man, a real man, until I had been at school several months. Impossible would it now be to give, or even to attempt to give, any idea of my state of mind when I learned from my teacher, good Sister Clara, that a priest was not only a man, but that if I were good enough, and bright enough, and would study hard I, I myself, might become a priest some day—especially if I knew all of my lessons well whilst in her class.

God alone knows to this sad day how very deeply I was impressed by all of that. He alone knows, too, how very hard and long and often I prayed and prayed for a true “vocation,” or a genuine calling, to the, to me then, most holy priesthood; and how good I then tried hard at least to be. Our Heavenly Father knows likewise how very often the mere thought of being allowed to go to school right in His own house kept me serious and prevented me from breaking the rules of that school which was then taught in the basement of the church.

I think, though, that whilst God alone really knew the great secret of my heart some people began to notice me, and to imagine that they knew something about me too. More than once had I observed various persons in church and out looking at me intently and exchanging glances if not remarks. Not infrequently did I hear my

own mother tell my father that she did not think that I, her oldest, was just like other boys, and that there was something unusual, if not exactly curious about me.

It seems now that I was then often too distant, too long silent and moody and pensive on the one hand for a healthy normal boy; and on the other, that I was too full of strange ideas and pertinent, and even impertinent questions. I did not grasp the full import of all of that then, however.

Perhaps if I had realized how trying, and may be how very embarrassing, many of my questions were, I would not have asked them. For the dear Lord knows that though I wanted to know a lot, and an awful lot, I did so want to be good; and very, very good. I wanted to be so very good that I could have a better and better chance to become a priest some day. I may remark here just in passing that this reputation for being rather unusual, and "so different" has not yet entirely deserted me, and that it may now perhaps become rather accentuated after this book sees the light of day in print.

Naturally it was my mother who observed me most, and who was most concerned about me. Not even to her though, did I reveal my great secret and longings—not until many years after, and just about three days before I departed for college. It might seem now that my good mother had a sort of intuition which prompted her to be sympathetic and encouraging in many ways; but not in all ways, as the sequel will shortly prove.

She seemed rather to like the idea when, without explaining why, I asked her to allow me to build an altar in a spare room upstairs. In fact, she even helped me to build it; and she gave me odd pieces of cloth out of which to fashion "vestments." In these "vestments" I

often tried to "say Mass," much to her interest and amusement, if not to her edification.

Often, as I now recall yet very vividly, I then, before my little altar there, felt like a priest—a real priest. In my own mind, and in the intensity of my very youthful ardor and devotion, I was a real priest, though a very young one. In actual fact, though, I did not then know it, I truly was a priest, a real and true priest—a priest "in potentia," as some of my clerical friends might say. In other words, I was a priest in potentiality, if not in actuality.

Many of the things I then did must have really interested my good mother as well as pleased her. There was one thing, though, which did not please her very much. Of this I still have a vivid and still rather warm recollection—and ambition caused it all.

After "saying Mass" often in a way to suit my even then rather critical self, I became ambitious enough to want, too, to "give Benediction." To do this I needed a "cope"—a large and beautiful and cloak-like vestment which the priest uses at this sacred function. But where to get really nice and fitting material, and enough of it, for that cope? That was the first question.

Finally I happened to think, one day, of some nice big red blankets stored away upstairs in what we children used to call the "little room." With me in those days, even if not now, to think meant to act—and act fast. Without much loss of time then I quietly got a small pair of shears of my mothers. With these I worked so very hard in cutting off a large piece of that big, thick red blanket that I almost wore out, almost completely wore out my poor little fingers.

With something much larger and heavier than a pair of shears did my good mother at once proceed to "wear

out" another, and here unmentionable, part of my youthful and tender anatomy, when she just happened in and saw me "giving Benediction" with quite a large section of one of her best red woolen blankets upon my shoulders; and thus ended the first "Benediction," if not the entire career of a certain very young "priest."

CHAPTER II

IN THE POOR MAN'S COLLEGE

The rather strenuous event narrated at the end of the previous chapter temporarily dampened the ambitions and somewhat slowed up the activities of a certain rather young "priest," but it by no means drowned or otherwise killed them, though he was too "uncomfortable" for many more and immediate priestly activities.

Especially was poor little I too "uncomfortable" to sit, or to sit long, at least, behind an open door, and to "hear the confessions" of some of my playmates whom I had taught to "go to confession" to me through the long and narrow space between that door and its frame, which was left when the door was as wide open as I could get it with me and my little stool behind there.

By degrees, though, all of my old ambitions and desires returned; and they returned much intensified. I had learned, however, not to make this fact too conspicuous. Instead, then, of yielding to my ardent desire for outward demonstration—especially of my ability "to give Benediction"—I would, as often as possible, just quietly slip away as little noticed as I could, and go to some place where I could be alone, all alone and in quiet.

There were many such places not very far from where we then lived on the outskirts of the city. Within quite easy reach in those days was a large body of woods; and about midway, and all of the way through them, ran a beautiful and winding stream which we used to call "Old Nat Bow's Creek."

In some quiet little nook along that stream would I

sit for hours whenever the mood was upon me, and whenever I felt it discreet to wander away to seclusion. There would I sit and pray and dream day-dreams upon day-dreams.

There, too, would I with a stick, draw an altar upon the sand and then give full vent to my fancy, and do in imagination what I could not do in reality any more at home with certainty and comfort. Oh! that the blissful, blissful day-dreams which I then had about the dignity and the sublimity of the priesthood and all else in it might have even partially come true in the days after I had really entered its ranks! What a happy and what a very different mortal I would now be!

Eventually, however, it began to dawn upon me that to become a priest I must be able to do something else besides to pray and to have day-dreams; and in my own way I began to realize that God helps those who help themselves.

I began to realize, too, that to become a genuine priest one must be able to do something more than just to say Mass (and to give Benediction) and to look dignified. It, too, dawned upon me somehow that a real priest just simply had to know a lot—a whole big lot of things—especially since some priests whom I saw, as time went on, seemed to be at great pains to impress us youngsters, at least, with the fact that they knew a lot; and a whole big lot, too.

To know a lot a person just would have to study and to learn a lot, it seemed to me even then. By degrees I began to ask questions. I wanted to know, and I just had to know, exactly what one had to do, and where one had to go to do it, to become a priest.

My questions were long and well studied by me, and they were intended, at least, to throw people off the scent

of my real, and to me, then, most valuable secret. My answers to the interrogations which my questions would, in spite of me, beget, were intended to be evasive—very evasive. Nobody was going to worm my secret out of me just by asking questions—that I was determined upon. Oftentimes, as I recall it all now, I satisfied myself with great glee that I was getting pretty valuable information without the least suspicion; and that I was giving little or none in return—something which I have again, of late, had to practice, especially when dealing with a “Chancellor” or an “Apostolic Administrator.”

Was the success I then apparently, at least, met with any sign that I was thus early developing a sort of talent for casuistry (if not for sophism)? If so, was this one of the early marks of a true vocation to the Catholic priesthood?

Useless would it be here to do more than merely to advert to the fact that I kept my longings and cravings for the priesthood a real and a profound secret from everyone except Almighty God and from my confessor, or the priest to whom I went regularly to confession. Not even to this priest did I speak plainly until about a year before I started off to college; but all that takes me too far ahead of my story.

At the age of 14, and when I had successfully finished the sixth grade in the “Brothers’ School,” where I had been sent after completing three years’ study under the good Benedictine sisters who then taught only rather small boys—at that age of 14 it seemed to me that I had learned all that could be taught—to me, at least—in such a school.

Vividly do I remember even now how those good brothers used to look at me, and to ask questions, at times; and how puzzled they seemed about me. In par-

ticular do I remember a remark made one day by Brother M. (still living in this year of grace 1926) to the effect that I had a "poker-face." That remark I had heard from others, but I did not know then what it meant. As Brother M. made use of it, and since he had so much trouble trying to get a bit of Arithmetic into my head, I concluded that a "poker-face" must be the face of one who likes only figures of speech, and is worthless in Mathematics. However, I did not put it all in just those words then.

Paradoxically, I left school at the age of 14, and at the end of the sixth grade, so I could, as well and as speedily as possible, enter college to begin studying for the priesthood! Being the oldest of eight children, and knowing full well that my father would never do for one of us more than he would for another, I was certain that he would never send me to college unless he felt able to send all of his children; and this I felt that he would never be.

If I ever got to college, then, it would have to be through my own initiative and effort, I knew. The only, and the immediate thing, as I then saw it, was to go to work and earn money—and I went to work. By great good fortune I went to work in a printing establishment, which I had often heard was a "Poor Man's College." This seemed to me from the start to be a good place in which to learn a lot; and I did so want to know a whole lot.

After working some time as a printer I got a very minor position on a certain newspaper. As a printer I had not only saved every cent I could—a rather rare thing for a votary of the art preservative in those days—but I had studied and read a great deal in my own way, and I had done quite a little anonymous writing.

With the idea of still further hastening my entrance

into college—and I was then 19—I made the most I could of that newspaper job, such as it was, and I read omniverously if not too well. Always, though, did I study and read with an eye to the priesthood, as I felt that a priest ought to know about everything that could be known.

For three years, and until I was 22, I kept at this newspaper work in one way or another. In other words, more than fifteen years had elapsed between the time I first wanted to become a priest and the time when I could at last enter college to begin studying directly for the priesthood. I think I may say that I have done pretty much everything on a paper from blowing dust out of type-cases to writing “editorials.”

Since an apprentice in a printing establishment used to be (and I think still is) called a “devil”—a “printers’ devil”—it could be said, I believe, that I have gone all the way from the devil to the priesthood. It may be said by some, too, when this book gets out, that I have now reverted to a worse than primitive type. But be that as it may. There must be a real and an adequate cause for everything in this world.

CHAPTER III

THE BETTER MAN'S COLLEGE

Whatever of the Devil, whether of the printers' variety or the sheol species, there might have been about me in other days or years, most certainly there was little of any kind in me when in September, 1896, I finally entered St. Z. college, in another state, to begin there my direct studies for the priesthood. Whilst I would not wish to be considered as ever being piously egotistical, I think I can say that few ministerial students could well enter upon their courses of study with a better heart, and with much purer and more noble desires for the greater honor and glory of God; for the salvation of men's souls, and the good of their bodies, than I did then.

St. Z. college was and still is an institution of learning whose one and only cause for existence is to help teach and to train eligible young men for the "Roman Catholic" priesthood. It receives and keeps only those students who have, or are supposed to have, a certain number of the "usual signs" of what is termed a "priestly vocation," or a special calling to the priesthood.

The curriculum, the rules, and the precise and military-like discipline of such an institution are, and can only be, intended for those who want to become priests—and to pay the price for so wanting. By "the price" here is meant not only the few hundreds of dollars a year for tuition, board, etc.; but the price of personal liberty; the price of long, long hours a day in study-hall and class-room; and in prayer, meditation, rigid observance of trying and well-thought out rules. Such students

must pay this price at a place like that day by day, from one end of a session to another, for six long years; and then only as a mere preparation for another, and a higher course of studies lasting six years more in an ecclesiastical seminary.

The first two years of the course of a college like that of St. Z. may be said to be more or less like that of a junior high school, with the exception that Latin is much more stressed and exactly learned from the very start. The last four years of the course are devoted to an intensive yet wide enough study of Latin and Greek, and maybe Hebrew, along with several of the modern languages, with most particular emphasis in this country upon English. Though the higher Mathematics are well studied, not the same stress seems to be laid upon them in such an institution as in some others. Along with all of these, of course, go ancient, medieval and modern History, Church History, etc.

It would be perhaps needless to remark that no little time is spent in prayer, meditation, "spiritual reading," listening to various explanations and admonitions, etc. The idea might seem to be to give the student little time for independent reflections upon the priesthood, but to compel him to accept only the impressions of it which his superiors want to give. These impressions, most sad to say, are at times, it might seem, very very different from the stern reality, as more than one unfortunate man has found to his extreme sorrow, after becoming a priest.

St. Z. college was in my time located about five miles from the little town of E. It has since burned completely and been rebuilt on a much greater and more modern scale on the outskirts of a large city, and about twelve miles from its former site.

The original location of the college was in a beautiful,

rolling and fertile country, with magnificent and really impressive oak and chestnut forests predominating, and with here and there a bit of "short-needle" pine or spruce to relieve the monotony—if that word "monotony" can be used in even a very general description of that magnificent country.

Somehow I have always loved the country, God's own land it has ever seemed to me. It was this love of things rural which, on my first day at college, made me realize that there were other difficulties to contend with in such an institution of learning besides hard study and long hours.

I had, very soon after my arrival, observed a large number of students, either alone or in small groups, just pacing to and fro over what served as a campus. This was shortly after the beginning of the noon recreation or recess; and this recreation period lasted about an hour and a quarter then.

This hour and a quarter appeared to me to be a reasonable time in which to take a quiet and invigorating walk around the woods and hills, and to see a little more of that beautiful country before beginning my first afternoons study and class-room work.

Hence I proposed a walk around out there to several other students who were "old-comers." Would that I could put into words some idea of the astonishment manifested thereupon by these same "old-comers," to whom I spoke. They seemed to be astounded at my ignorance or audacity and soon told me, and in no uncertain words, that a walk around out there was absolutely out of the question—unless, of course, I wanted to be ignominiously expelled from college on my first day!

In almost less time than it takes to tell it, I was informed that no student of that college was ever allowed

to go "out of bounds" without a very special, and an almost impossible permission. Even upon the very rare and uncertain occasions when a group was allowed to "go on a walk" one or more priests was always along to watch the boys carefully to see that they did not smoke, enter a store or private dwelling—and above all, that they did not even look at a female, much less talk to one.

All of that was a real revelation to me, and I was at first inclined to doubt it much. When, however, the full truth of it was manifest, it made me feel like a prisoner. True, there were no walls or bars about that place. There were, however, certain well-defined lines beyond which no student dared go.

Many, many times during the long, long years after that, and particularly when a strenuous week's work in study-hall and class-room had more than fatigued me, and when I craved and craved so for a long and health-giving walk over the fields and through the woods, and when I then gazed at those miserable old boundary lines did I realize that stone walls alone "do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." "Boundary lines" were for us an unusually effective substitute, it seemed.

For a rather vigorous and nervously active man of 22 it was not easy to reconcile myself to such, to me at least, useless confinement, to say nothing of settling down to a regular day's schedule of study, class-room work, meals and short recesses which took just sixteen hours a day to complete, and to arise the next morning and the next, to begin all over again in seemingly endless monotony.

Where there is a will, though, there is often a way; and where I could not well find a way I made one. In fact, I just had to find some way to make myself at least partially satisfied, and to get right down to hard study with many students from four to six years my junior and

who had gone right out of school to college whilst I had grown "rusty" along the lines of regular and systematic study for more than seven years. It was some consolation, though, to have with me in my class several men much my senior, and to note that they found some things even worse than I did.

As I look back at it all now after a lapse of nearly thirty years it is remarkable to me that out of a class of forty-seven who started out together with me in September, 1896, only seven of us finished together. Some found the strain too much and just had to give up, much to the disgust of their relatives who quite probably felt themselves disgraced thereby. A few died, and some, I believe, became physical and mental wrecks.

More than one student for the priesthood have I known to become absolutely insane; and not a few priests have I known to go the same way. A partial record of the Catholic priests or students either now in or who have been in insane asylums, or in institutions for the nervously broken down would perhaps be a startling revelation to more than one Catholic and non-Catholic layman. And even more startling would it be to try to judge from the ravings and the rambling talk of these poor unfortunates just exactly what brought them there!

CHAPTER IV

THE LAW OF COMPENSATION

In that long and very carefully prepared schedule of studies at St. Z. college which I was trying so hard to follow; in that strict discipline to which every student there was subjected; and above all, in that to me most close, trying and useless confinement through which I had at least to exist, there was indeed a "weariness of the flesh," if not of the soul. However, whilst there was little there to "make Weariness forget his toil" there were a few things.

What probably made me slow in finding those few things was the fact that to earn my bread, and to make money to help get me where I then was, I had been compelled for several years, and in the more plastic and formative period of my life, to get around rather lively, and to keep pretty irregular hours, whilst working hard at times. Moreover I had to meet men and women under many and varying circumstances, and I had seen at least a bit of the "seamy side of life." Moreover, I had long been accustomed to be treated as a man among men, and a fairly responsible one too.

All was then different with me there in that college. More like dumb, irresponsible cattle did we seem to be driven, and seldom led, much less were we allowed to develop any initiative and any ability to stand upon our own feet, and to do things for ourselves. Just how all of that would or could develop true manhood in many of those students I for one could not tell. I did not then even faintly surmise that that quality of true

manhood might not always seem to be just what was really wanted in a priest; and that all of that repressive discipline had been carefully calculated to subdue, if not to extinguish more than one of the requisites of a real and a complete man.

Hence, with all of my perhaps abnormal cravings to enter the priesthood, and with all of my ardent desire to make any and every reasonable sacrifice to reach my goal, I could not, I just could not, somehow ever get away from the idea that such a wanton sacrifice of my liberty, and even of my health and individuality, was something very contrary, to Nature, and not only useless, but positively injurious to me in more ways than one.

Yet it was, and it remained evident, that if I really ever wanted to become a priest, much, if not all, of this just must be endured for at least twelve long years. Then I saw that if I really wished to "buckle the fortune" of the priesthood upon my back "I must have patience to endure the load"; and that was not easy.

However, and in time, I began to realize that even in such a place there is something like the "Law of Compensation" which will work its way out—sometimes, and in some ways. Therefore, if I so often, and so very poignantly, and in such before undreamed of ways felt myself a driven prisoner I could frequently then go to another "Prisoner"; and to a most kind, powerful and consoling "Prisoner"—the "Prisoner of the Tabernacle." To Him, there, upon the altar in our dear old college chapel I could in silence and sadness, pour out my unexpected troubles and sorrows, and go away refreshed and with a deeper insight into His own invitation to go to Him when burdened and when seeking refreshment.

To say much more about compensations along this line might savor too much of affectation to too great piety

then. Hence, I shall remark only that at no hour of the day or night when I had managed to slip quietly away into that chapel did I fail to find there some other poor students doing, apparently, at least, just what I was going to do. At least occasionally would I find there a priest, too. That latter fact impressed me deeply—and lastingly.

If the greatest of compensations of the life of a student in such a college were to be found in the chapel, they were not all there. Among the others found elsewhere were physical exercise of a kind; intercourse with my fellow-students who numbered about 225, and came from many sections of the United States, as well as from Canada and Europe—and a few even from the Philippines, and from Asia. Then, too, there was the compensation of being able to keep clean—at times at least!

Though there were some rather modest and quite primitive devices, if not facilities, for physical exercise besides just walking and walking, ever and monotonously walking to and fro “within bounds,” like a lot of dangerous prisoners within a stockade under heavy guard, there was nothing at all like a gymnasium, or like any well-planned and systematically taken exercise to develop the bodies of the then future priests, so that they would later possess the “*mentem sanam*” in the “*corpore sano*”; or the sound mind in the sound body.

A hand-ball alley there was on both the Junior and the Senior divisions of the college grounds; and there was now and then a modest and denaturized football game, as well quite a bit of baseball in season. At times, too, and by way of compensation, there was a chance to get a very refreshing bath, or at least a “foot-bath.”

For the accommodation of the whole student body of 225 there were just exactly three bath-rooms and three

bath-tubs in those days! There was, however, and again by way of compensatizon, a "foot-bath" room, away down in the basement. In its damp, mouldy and gloomy depths there was a line of wooden and water-tight boxes. To these we had access twice a week—on Thursdays and Saturdays; and it was then no little of a compensation to be able to bathe one's pedal extremities in cold water, at least, after so much walking and walking just to and fro.

Some of the baseball games, too, were quite a compensation now and then, even though there was never anything like intercollegiate baseball allowed around that college. The reason why there were no baseball or other games between the students of that particular college and those of other colleges not so far distant might seem to be that we clerical students were ever, and in every way, and day by day, to be impressed with the alleged fact that we were the "chosen of the Lord," and that our Superiors were not going to take a chance of having us contaminated.

Hence students for the priesthood there must by all means be preserved from the distraction, if not from the mental and spiritual contagion, of intercourse with other Catholic young men of their own age—and this must be done even upon the athletic field. More than once since, and especially of late, have I been tempted to believe that all of this was done to prevent clerical students from realizing what fools some mortals can be in wanting to become priests.

All of these things, even, were not without their compensations. What we did not know didn't and could not worry us—then, at least. And that might have been some compensation, too.

CHAPTER V

"THE PROPER STUDY OF MANKIND IS MAN"

Somehow I had acquired, and at a rather early age, the knack and the habit of observing, listening quietly at, and of studying people—in my own crude way, at least. Besides, I was more or less imitative along some lines. As I recall it all now I generally tried, at least, not merely to imitate, but to improve somewhat upon what I studied.

That tendency quietly to study and to imitate just naturally and instinctively followed me to college, just as Mary's little lamb followed her to school one day. And not only one day, but on many, many days it got me into trouble. Several times it came near to getting me into pretty serious trouble, too. As I recall it now the wonder, the miracle is that I so successfully "got by" with what I did, even if, as I believed, I so well and often concealed my real purpose in asking so many questions of different priests.

Whilst I was, of course, naturally interested in learning all I could about and from my fellow-students in so cosmopolitan an institution, I was instinctively and far more deeply interested in, and I was much more keenly and intently studying every priest I came into contact with there.

My reason, of course, for so studying all priests was that I hoped to become a priest myself some day, and I wanted to become a good one—as good a one as possible.

The best help I could think of to enable me to become a good priest was then a study and a very careful study,

if not an imitation, of priests, and especially of those priests who taught in that college, which was, so to speak, an incubator of the priesthood. It then appeared to me certain that such priests as these who taught in an institution like that must serve as the very best of models.

Before that time I had seen priests mostly from a rather distant standpoint; and distance is said to lend enchantment to the view. Distance had, it seems, done just that very thing for me from early childhood; and done it well. This distance seems to have done just that very thing for untold numbers of other good Catholics, too.

Never shall I, never can I, forget my first long talk to and close-range study of a priest at that college. It was about a week after I entered, and during the early afternoon, or "long recreation" period. With two other students I was walking up and down and down and up, trying to get a bit of fresh air and exercise on a piece of roadway which was not actually "out of bounds," but was rather close, if not suspiciously close to being so.

This proximity to the line of demarcation between retention in that college and expulsion from it I had not even faintly noticed, much less thought about, so busy was I listening to my companion, who was from Butler, Pa., and who was giving me quite a graphic description of oil-well "shooting" in that section of the country.

Suddenly I felt a heavy hand laid upon my shoulder in about the way a detective—a detective of fiction, at least—might at times be supposed to lay his hand upon a long and cleverly sought criminal and say "I want you." I was much relieved to see that it was only the hand of a kindly-faced and rather rubicund and portly priest, with whom the whole world seemed to be going pretty well, even if he was quite bald, and was minus a few teeth.

He came between me and my companion and began to walk with, and thus to bestow quite an honor upon us, I at first thought. He was not long in telling us his name, and we each lost no time in giving him our names. He then told us that he was just going around and becoming a little acquainted with the "new-comers" of that year. This was doubtless the truth; but to me it was soon evident that it was not the whole truth. His questions, more than once rather crudely put, it seemed to me, soon betrayed his real animus.

When the real object of his walk and his questions became so clear I just could not help then and there beginning to lose a certain respect for this particular priest, and may be for others whom he represented. Without wishing to boast I think I can say that his questions, so unskillfully put, soon gave me the idea that he was trying to "pump" us both and to learn all he could about our past and present, if not of our future—all he could at one time, at least.

Being one of the faculty of such an institution of higher learning he, like his confreres probably, had a right to know all they reasonably could about the young men who came to this place to study and to prepare themselves for the priesthood. His way of going at this though seemed so much worse than crude and transparent that it looked to me as though it would put every student upon his guard, and thus defeat the very end which those priests had in view, as well as to lower himself very considerably as a priest in the eyes of all he would ever have "to pump"—and to help guide.

Inexperienced as I was in many other things I felt myself superior to that good priest when it came to being able to ask questions without arousing much or any suspicion, or of running the risk of betraying my real

object in so doing. Hence I began to have quite a bit of quiet fun parrying his questions, and asking him a few, until the recreation ended.

This same experience with questions I had quite a large number of times with other priests there. About the only difference that I could discern was that some were just a little or a great deal more crude than others. Hence I just could not help wondering often at the curious and interesting study these good Reverend Fathers themselves presented whilst they were so intent upon questioning and learning all they could from and about their charges.

The recreation grounds, I soon learned, were not the only place in which priests could be studied to advantage—or to disadvantage. Another place, and even a more valuable one, was the Refectory, or large dining hall. There I could get even a better idea of them—some of them at least.

A man is said to be what he eats. Sometimes whilst he eats he may give some inkling of just what he is, not only by what he actually eats and drinks, but by the manner in which he does it all. What a picture those sixteen priests away up there at that table, raised several feet above the students' tables, really presented! It is well worth remembering how they sat there so high above where they could keep sharp eyes upon us all, and just where we could all see and study them easily if we wanted to, as they fared so sumptuously at that table which just seemed to groan under its weight of the best of foods and wines.

CHAPTER VI

LEARNING TOO MUCH

Ever since the days of Publius Cyrus, away back there in the first century before the Christian era, and probably long before that, has it been said or written that "Familiarity breeds contempt." With equal truth may it be said that too close and frequent proximity to persons and things which we not only once had the utmost respect for, but even stood in actual awe of, may not only cause one to lose much of that respect, but perhaps to lose even all real regard for them.

Something like this most certainly proved at college to be the case with me, and with my ideas and attitude toward priests—to an appreciable extent, at least. Like innumerable other and unsophisticated Catholics I had ever and instinctively regarded priests, all priests, as being the most superior creatures of God upon earth, since their calling was the most sublime that man might conceive of.

Priests, it then appeared to me, were in a class to themselves. Hence it seemed to me in the depths of my ignorance that they just could not do anything even a little out of the way, much less do anything seriously wrong—and do that knowingly and deliberately. For was not a priest, as I had often been taught to believe—was not a priest a man with a "vocation," or with a very special call from God? Was not his intellectual development the product of many long years of study and training in the best of schools, colleges, seminaries and universities?

Was not a priest moreover frequently called, and was he not in reality "Another Christ" ("Sacerdos Alter Christus")? Was not the priest vested with that marvelous power actually to forgive sin, and even "mortal sin"? Could not a priest, like the first Christ, change the substance of bread and wine into that of the Body and Blood of God Himself? And in doing that does he not say at the Consecration of the Mass: "This is *my* body—this is *my* blood"?

Would not, must not, then, such a wonderful being as a priest, a priest, most naturally and instinctively do everything which would inspire respect for himself and for his sacred and God-like calling? Most certainly, it at first, and for a long time, seemed to me.

The fact that a priest was truly human after all—and sometimes, may be, all too human—and that he might, at times at least, act in a rather if not in a very, very human way, just could not, for years even enter my mind, much less lodge there and afford much food for reflection and become the source of endless sadness. All of those ideas about the dignity and the power of priests, and the sublimity of the priesthood were the result of most careful teaching and training on the part of the good sisters and brothers and the priests who at one time or another had me under their care.

It is a rather crude manner of expressing it, and it will, whilst an absolute fact, be a shocking thing to many Catholics, when I say that nothing before had ever, or could ever even begin to take so much of the idealism, and the beauty, and the poetry, along with no little happiness, out of my life as was taken away from it when I began to see too much of priests at very close range—and see this too often, as well as to learn too much about them.

Along with other things that I later learned about priests at college is the fact that it is the very quintessence and more of discretion, if not of real wisdom, not to let those same priests know that you are observing and studying them and their real ways rather closely and keenly. Infinitely more prudent it seems to be, too, not to breathe a syllable of it all either, and especially to one of the "faithful," or one of the so easily shocked as well as very gullible Catholic laity, since it is not the doing of some things, but the publishing of them that counts, and which brings odium and other punishments.

It was one evening at the "spiritual reading" period, about three months after I had entered St. Z. college, that some of these things began to impress me forcibly, and it was the next day after, that some became more evident and forcible. On that particular evening, instead of listening at "spiritual reading" we had to listen to a pretty strong talk in the study-hall upon Self-Denial—"self-abnegation," I remember so well that that great big and fat priest of a professor called it.

My! how that immense and well-fed man of a priest did dwell and hammer most forcibly if not very effectively upon the great virtue of self-denial—"conquest of the flesh," he so often and so very vigorously called it! How that portly, as well as reverend, father did blaze away with the very heaviest of his oratorical guns upon the absolute necessity of denying and denying ourselves—denying ourselves often even of the most permissible things in the refectory, or dining hall!

"Deny! Deny yourselves for Christ's sake, even as Christ denied Himself for the sake of you"; and "Give thy soul her desire and she will make thee a joy to thy enemies"! he repeated over and again, more and more vigorously, there in that study-hall, until I felt that self-

denial, and especially self-denial at meals, might seem to be a prime requisite for a real priest.

And oh! My heavens! My great heavens!! How that same good and portly and loud-mouthed priest did eat and fill his whole paunch with good things at dinner the next day there at that big table in the Refectory which just seemed to groan under the weight of the very best food and wines procurable. Of course, "Prohibition" had not yet become the law of the land, and it was not yet a sin for even a priest to drink wine like a gentleman—especially for his stomach's sake.

Whatever the moral of his talk on self-denial the night before, there was just one thing that was self-evident to me about that big, fat and hungry priest, and that was that he certainly seemed to be very well disposed towards his "enemies" whom he referred to in his quotation from Solomon the evening before. Perhaps, though, learned man that he was, he just did not want to be unnatural. Nature is said to abhor a vacuum, you know—and may be he just had an immense vacuum in his digestive apparatus, and he did not want it to remain thus.

Most dangerous would it have been for a poor simple and unsophisticated student even to be seen noticing what the Reverend Fathers ate or did there at that college. To be caught at it meant trouble; and to be known to ask questions or to talk about certain things meant—expulsion!

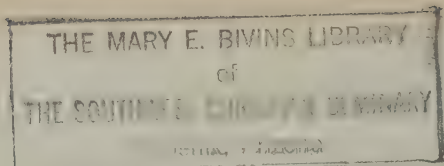
It might seem that a bit of indiscretion along that line came near to meaning expulsion, in a way, to me once upon a time—and expulsion "for not having a proper vocation," as well as for "deficiency in Greek and Mathematics." Heaven alone knows how very justly I really could have been dropped because of my at first slow progress in the higher Mathematics, and in the language of Euripides and of Homer.

All of this, though, just did not afterwards seem to be the sole cause of a certain letter which it might appear that I was to get from the President of the college, and which letter was to be sent during the early part of my third vacation, to tell me to stay home and to "try the World" again. This kind of letter, as I understand it now, was but a nice, quiet means of getting rid of a suspicious student whom the Faculty, for various reasons, did not care, or perhaps did not dare to expel outright during a term.

Of that real or only proposed letter I was for some time most blissfully ignorant. Whether it was ever even written or not I cannot now tell. Most certainly I did not get it. What I can tell, though, is that when I got back to college at the end of that vacation a day ahead of time to get a good location in a dormitory and elsewhere I was told by good old Father D., whom I met after supper that night, that he was surprised to see me back.

When I asked why, he enquired whether I had not received a letter from the Reverend President telling me to stay home. Upon receiving a negative reply he asked me further if I were not the student who was "always eyeing the Fathers so in the refectory," and who had asked such and such "impertinent, if not irreverent questions," and made such and such remarks about them.

Knowing just how well I could plead guilty to these "soft impeachments," and believing that discretion is at times the better part of valor, I fortunately managed to evade until a few other students just happened to stroll around. Then the topic of conversation was changed by me more or less adroitly. For better or for worse I never heard any more about that letter. But many a time since have I wished that I had.



CHAPTER VII

CRAWLING INTO A SHELL

Few if any non-Catholics can possibly have even the most remote idea of just what the priesthood and priests mean to good and pious, but ill-informed or uninformed Catholics. For them the priest is not only an instrumentality of the great God, but he partakes of the very power of God himself. He, for example, can change for them the substance of bread and wine into that of the body and the blood of Christ Himself—and Christ is God. Moreover, and more to the point, a priest in the eyes of Catholics cannot only forgive sin, but he can decide for himself just what sins, and just exactly whose sins are to be forgiven, and whose sins are not to be forgiven. In other words, the priest has for them that God-like power to cleanse the soul of even the worst of sins, and thus to decide who is to go to Heaven or to the tortures of Hell for all eternity, by giving “absolution” for sin, or withholding it.

Not only the fact that a priest is supposed to be a man of superior education, but that he has that awe-inspiring power of God Himself makes that same priest a being to be admired by the unenlightened Catholics—and to be too often feared by them. So intense is this fear in all too many, if not in all cases, that regardless of what a priest might say or even presume to do—and do in any way—countless Roman Catholics would not dare raise their voices, much less raise hands, to defend themselves, their homes or anyone in their homes from a priest! This may sound like rather strong language, but more than

one who is even moderately well posted will quickly realize that in it I have but veiled, for the present, some rather cogent facts, instead of exaggerating them.

All of these sublime ideas about the priesthood and priests not only produce awe and fear in the minds of the common, or garden variety, of "the faithful," but really give them some of the greatest of pleasure and consolation which they can find here upon earth because when dealing with priests they feel that they are pretty near to God Himself! So very great is that pleasure and consolation, and so insidiously and constantly are these ideas inculcated by the priesthood and its many minions that practically all "good" Catholics would rather die than be convinced that there is a fearful lot of deception if not fraud in it all, and that they themselves are the poor victims!

As a consequence, pious and "practical" Catholics abhor the very idea of being deprived of the real pleasure which the very thought of the priesthood and their priests bring to them. Even the most intelligent and best informed Protestants might be unable to believe or to understand all of this, and to comprehend just what such Catholics might do, or at least want to do if possible, to one who would disillusion them—especially if that one happened to be a former priest.

These Catholics might seem to forget, if they ever knew or thought of it, that a priest is not even the Catholic Church, much less really God Himself, whose every word is a divine fiat.

Never before entering college to study for the priesthood had I myself ever seen or even dreamed of a priest doing anything which in my then rather austere and narrow mould of mind appeared to be wrong. I had, however, seen little or nothing before of priests except

when they were acting their parts as priests in the various theatres of their priestly activities in church or elsewhere. There had before been too much of a thick wall between me and the real priesthood, just as there are so many walls between the public at large and even the grounds of so many Roman Catholic institutions, to say nothing of what really goes on in the interior of the buildings behind those walls.

Very slight as the few peccadillos of those good priests who taught me at college now seem after seeing so many other things in the Catholic priesthood during nearly nineteen years I just could not help observing them, and being impressed, and even influenced by them. Somehow, for example, I just could not get off my mind what appeared, to me, at least, to be the awful hypocrisy of that big fat priest there who had given us that powerful talk on the absolute necessity of self-denial—and then had eaten so voraciously and so very bountifully the next day; and for all the days after that I saw him. The logic of that and of many other things went home very deeply and effectively with me.

However, as time went on there in that college it became more and more evident to me that I had better not see too much and think too much either, about some things. Still more evident did it become that I had better not be caught seeing things, and to be known again by the faculty, to be asking certain questions about them. All of this seemed best for two reasons:

First, like so many other good and faithful Catholics who really love their religion and revere their priests, and who get so much genuine pleasure and consolation out of it all, I just did not, and I did not then not for the world want my most highly treasured illusions about priests and the priesthood even minutely affected, much less

shattered. Somehow, and perhaps subconsciously, I had begun to fear gravely that if I ever lost my reverence for and my faith in the priesthood, I might lose it in the Catholic Church, which had produced that fruit of the priesthood, by which I knew it, and would ever know it.

In the second place, there was that fear that being known as one who was always observing the Reverend Fathers at college would not be conducive to long residence in that same college—and I did so much want to stay long enough to complete its course.

There seemed, then, only one thing left to do if I really wanted to stay on and to become a good priest. That one thing, figuratively speaking, was to endeavor to make for myself a sort of very hard shell which none of those around me could even partially penetrate, much less break through—and then crawl into that shell and endeavor to keep my eyes and ears closed to many things; and above all, to keep my mouth shut as tightly as possible about everything.

This “shell” I determined to make out of good reading, frequent and ardent prayer, pious meditations, frequent communion—out of all of these plus a look for as complete unsophisticatedness as I could assume continuously. In fact, I determined to do any and everything which would keep my mind free of disturbing thoughts about priests and the priesthood, and which would keep me in that college studying for the attainment of that which I then still believed was man’s noblest destiny upon earth.

All of this appears now to have made of me a sort of enigma to faculty and to students alike. However, it all worked; and that was the thing. The proof is that I stayed to the end—and that more than one still thinks of me as an enigma, and a pretty curious one!

The greatest and most consoling thing of all though was that I regained and long kept most if not all of my former faith in priests and in the priesthood. This faith I managed to keep, too, not only until I became a priest myself, but for several years after.

To go into details about my life and studies and hours and discipline, and about what I saw of priests during my five years at the seminary of St. N after completing my six years' course at St. Z. college would doubtless be worse than boring.

Suffice it then to say of that seminary that like practically every other one of its kind, it was divided into two schools: the school of Philosophy and the school of Theology. In the school of Philosophy there was a two years' course of Scholastic Philosophy, which, as the reader may know, embraces such studies as Logic, Ontology, Cosmology, Anthropology, Natural Theology and Ethics.

Along with the metaphysical sciences went a year's course in Physics and Chemistry, and another year's course in Biology, together with an Introductory Scriptural course. Somehow I could not help observing there in the Philosophy school that very few students besides myself took any real interest in Chemistry, Physics and Biology. Most of them leaned greatly toward the Metaphysics, whilst about the only things in that particular line which interested me greatly were Logic and Psychology.

About the Metaphysics, with the before mentioned exceptions, there was for me, at least, too often a good bit of what Voltaire doubtless had in mind when he said that "When he to whom one speaks does not understand; and when he who speaks himself does not understand—that is metaphysics."

It would have boded ill, however, to have one of those "Reverend Professors" there in that great cosmopolitan seat of Catholic learning to suspect a student for the priesthood of having even a little knowledge of the works of Francois Marie Arouet, to say nothing of a bit of sympathy for some of them. In these as in so many other things my old shell stood me in well, very well.

The school of Theology embraced a four-year course. For better or worse I managed to get through with it in three years; and all during my five years in that seminary of St. N., and for some years after, I preserved almost intact my "shell" formed in college; and I did this in spite of all that I saw and heard!

Once, and once only, and that at the seminary, did I come dangerously near to breaking through and to shattering it completely; and it all happened thus: Students of Theology in our seminary were, at the end of each session, given a subject upon which to write a sermon during vacation. Upon their return in September the students had to hand in their sermon manuscripts at once so that they would not have a chance to do any work then upon them which ought to have been done during the summer.

In due time each of these manuscripts was returned to its writer, and he was given a reasonable chance to learn his sermon before being called upon to get up in the refectory or large dining hall to preach it, whilst the whole student-body and the Reverend Professors were eating their suppers or dinners and trying to listen to it amid the clatter of knives, forks and spoons and the shuffling of waiters, and other noises.

My particular subject for a "sermon" on the to me memorable occasion when I came so near to demolishing my "shell" completely was: "The Qualities of Contri-

tion." I am not quite sure, but I imagine for various reasons, that that particular sermon, or instruction, rather, of mine has gone down as a classic—a classic example of what a student of Catholic Theology, in such a seminary at least, *ought not* to give vent to.

The good Lord knows that that effort at a sermon of mine was not over good. I had been working too much nearly all summer on a certain newspaper to earn money for the next year's course to make it very good, even if I could. Between work and a two weeks' rest just before returning to my studies that blessed subject suffered greatly from lack of attention to it on my part. In fact, it was only three days before the seminary reopened that I began work upon it; and then I could work only intermittently.

Of course I realized that my written sermon effort was not a gem of purest ray serene when I handed it in after returning to the seminary of St. N., to begin my last year's course. I was totally oblivious, however, that my manuscript contained a most stupendous, a most horrible and unpardonable error—a most frightful and unpardonable error for a student in such a place at least. Where ignorance is bliss though, folly is it to be wise.

Blissfully ignorant was I then when I got up to "preach" that "sermon" of mine before that august assembly of priests and students who took the place of the "faithful" in a church. My one and only fear had been that my memory might fail me or play me a shabby trick like I had seen memory do for others.

But that was not to be the case with me. My memory worked well. It worked perfectly. So very perfectly did that infernal memory of mine work that it but served to emphasize my dreadful and unpardonable error of stating there publicly to such a simple-hearted if not

simple-minded body of the "faithful" that, that—that there was a controversy; yea, a controversy, a real controversy, among certain theologians about the exact number of the qualities of Contrition, or sorrow for sin.

A controversy—a controversy! "There is a controversy among Theologians"—among priests who know some Theology. What a terrible statement for me to make! and what a frightful and a scandalizing admission to make to "the faithful" about priests; yes, about priests! And what a "roasting," what a "roasting and roasting alive" I got for telling that fact to those poor, dear simple souls! I was just "roasted, and toasted and burned alive"—and not for preaching any error against Catholic doctrine, but for just "letting the cat out of the bag," in presence of the poor unsophisticated congregation of the "faithful" who presumably must be kept in utter ignorance also of the fact that there are, that there could even be, controversies (and not constant agreement and peace) between priests who know a little Theology.

Heaven alone knows what would have happened if I had hinted even at the too often demonstrably clear and absolute fact that there are not only mere theological controversies between a pretty big lot of priests, but that there are open and often serious fights among them over parish lines and money matters—and may be other things. Had I made the slightest reference then to these unseemly squabbles between a lot of priests *who are not* great theologians, or even passably decent ones, there would perhaps not be a trace of me in existence—as a priest, at least, and you would never have been able to read this book.

So very angry was I at the mere thought of a priest's having so much, and so very hypocritically to "pull the

wool" over the eyes of the poor, pitiful "faithful" so frequently and completely that I came very dangerously near to bursting through and shattering my shell completely, and to telling the whole crowd just exactly what I thought of such shameful duplicity. However, I didn't do it—not then. The time and place were not just right for me then.

CHAPTER VIII

BLIND LOVE—AND ITS EYE-OPENER

Love, true love, is reputed to be blind; and Marriage is said to be an eye-opener for more than one. With equal truth, it seems, it may be said that there are none so blind as those who don't see; except, may be, those who just don't want to, and who just won't see, and won't see until too late, because they fear to find serious defects in that which they most ardently love and get most pleasure out of.

Whilst I cannot speak from personal experience, of course, I know that it is said, at least, that no other thing in human existence brings more keen disappointment, and more acute suffering and sorrow than are brought into the life of a married couple when the glamor of romance, and the poetry of courtship days fade away in the mists of yesterdays, and when they are roughly brought by the inexorable hand of time face to face with the most unexpected and stern and painful realities of life—realities which they seldom dreamed could possibly exist, much less enter into their own lives.

It is likely but human to imagine that the keen disappointments and weighty sorrows which follow disillusionment in one's own particular state of life are really the severest upon earth, and the hardest to bear. My firm conviction, however, based upon nearly nineteen years of really careful observation of priests and of the laity is that there just cannot well be so much and such frightfully painful and distressing and paralyzing sorrow in the life of a disillusioned and completely dis-

appointed layman, even after the most unfortunate of marriages, as there must be in the life of a man who has entered the priesthood in good faith, and for many long years made the greatest of sacrifices to be able to do it, and then had his eyes opened after ordination to the most damnable of things which he had never dreamed could exist therein.

What does not detract one iota from all of this disappointment, pain and sorrow in the life of a disillusioned priest is the fact that not only has the knowledge of many of these most disappointing and trying things in the priesthood been long and knowingly and wilfully kept from him, especially during student days, for fear probably that they might "injure his vocation," but that he himself has been a party to all of this deception of himself, by deliberately shutting his own eyes to things which, if well and clearly known, might in time have changed the whole course of his life. It does not help much in any way either to recall the fact that one has wilfully shut his own eyes to so much just to keep from seeing too much, and becoming disillusioned; and from thereby losing his pleasure in the contemplation of all that which he, like so many other good and simple-minded Catholics, imagined there is in the priesthood.

In my own case this complete disillusionment and all of its consequent and great sorrow have been things of slow growth in the priesthood, and I have fought them most severely every fraction of every inch, and in every way I knew how until Easter Sunday of this year of grace 1926. All of this has taken nearly nineteen years of my life as a priest. These facts are mentioned to give the reader some idea now before I even hint at the frightful and harrowing factors which entered into the climax that I have by no means acted hastily in leaving the priesthood behind.

As I look back at it all now there were some happy and very happy days for me in the priesthood. These were, however, during my first few months after ordination, and before my eyes had began to open too wide, as it were. There were, for example, the inexpressible joy of ordination, and of the realization that I had finally attained that which for twenty-six years I had craved and prayed and worked so very hard, as well as endured so much to attain.

Moreover, there was the actual ecstasy of my "First Mass," and of my "First Blessing" to my then rather numerous friends and interested relatives. Then came my first appointment as assistant. I was by great good fortune assigned to a really pious and saintly priest—a *rara avis* as far as my personal experience goes—in the little town of G. Under the very kind and fatherly direction of this dear pastor I not only said Mass daily and preached and heard confessions, but I began really to like to visit the sick and comfort the afflicted, though it was so trying to bury the dead, and to try to console the bereaved. For a while; yes, for a while, I felt supremely happy to think that I had been able to become a priest at last and do such consoling work.

It did not take much of a student of human nature to realize that my first pastor was indeed "a man of sorrows." These he bore, though, nobly and silently, and thus to the end of his all too, too short life. At any rate, he never breathed a word of them and their cause to me. Much have I learned of them since, though, and of why he probably kept them all from me. Poor fellow! In the great goodness of his heart he did not wish to be the one to begin my sad and most painful disillusionment in the priesthood!

Too short, all too short, was my stay with that good

priest who needed an assistant only during the summer months when he had to have Mass regularly every Sunday at a resort about sixty miles from his modest little home. With no warning, and with little time to say good-bye to the many and warm friends I had made in that beautiful and very historic city of G., I was ordered, at the end of three months, to leave at once and go to W. immediately, and to help out the assistant at the one church there until the pastor returned from a hospital in another city for treatment. This "treatment" I soon learned from several sources was for severe chronic alcoholism.

Remember, though, that that was in 1907, and before it was a mortal sin for even a priest to drink, and when it was no very great crime for some pretty good citizens to become intoxicated once in a while. This particular priest's condition was not then the cause of much of a shock to me.

I had seen priests, even some who were Professors at a college and a seminary in which young men were taught and trained for the priesthood, drink, and drink daily; and drink enough. These Reverend Professors drank like gentlemen though; and as far as I know they never overdid the thing. However, I can recall now that more than once did it seem to me at college as though another hour or two of an after dinner nap might have paled and composed more the faces of some which were unusually ruddy when they had to teach the first afternoon classes. A little more sleep might then have improved their tempers, too, at times, it seemed.

As the disciple is not supposed to be above the master I tried and really succeeded in feeling very charitably disposed toward that poor erring pastor. I thought that may be he, too, had seen his masters drink; that that

example was too contagious, and that he had innocently begun to drink and thus formed a habit which, though it had overcome him, was now going to be manfully overcome by him. As a matter of fact, that poor unfortunate never did master that habit; and perhaps, from what I later learned about him, he just did not want to. It might now seem that the poor fellow was just foolishly trying to drown in drink some really weighty sorrows, the nature of which, on the part of a priest, I am just going to leave to your imagination.

If the conduct of that particular priest did not shock me over much there in that particular town I met with some things which did shock; and shock me most severely and lastingly there, poor, unsledged and so unsophisticated being that I then was. And that shock was so unexpected and so very severe for me then that it began at once to loosen the very foundation of my priesthood for me.

To that church and to the rectory at which I was then temporarily located whilst the pastor was away "taking the cure" came at times in those days quite a respectable number of priests. Most of these came from a large city less than twenty miles away; but the others came from more distant points. These priests came to go to confession outside of their own cities where they were known—and they often came incognito, so as not to be recognized by the laity.

Somehow they all seemed to want to go to confession to a strange priest; and for reasons of their own. Whilst I cannot and will not even now violate the seal, or the secrecy, of the Confessional I think that in a general and very impersonal way I can say that I began then to learn that not all priests are just as pure either in mind and heart, or actually in body as they might be. Priests

are after all human beings, and neither their long, long course of studies and training, nor anything else has ever denaturalized them—physically, at least—as so many seem to think. In other words, priests are just as complete and as human along some lines as other men, though they are supposed, at least, to keep away from the opposite sex.

If I were not certain otherwise of all of this and more, the proof of it all to me would be the fact that I have never heard the confession of a priest who was not guilty of serious sexual thoughts, and of ardent sexual desires, at least. All of these thoughts and desires, and the acts flowing at times from them might not seem to have had a very strong leaning toward solitary sin either. Not a few were just the contrary, and some were—*cum eodem sexu*! (I just had, for modesty's sake, to put that last into Latin). You may ask a priest to translate it if you wish.

It ill becomes me to say more along this line. I believe that I can say, though, that I soon acquired the reputation there of being a rather austere, rough and unsatisfactory confessor—for priests, at least. I just could not then bring myself to that frame of mind and heart which was indicated to me by a certain well known priest who came to that town, too, to go to confession.

This priest, it appears, really wanted to give me a friendly hint that in the matter of hearing the confessions of priests it would be more expedient for me to let it all just become a case of "If you tickle me" by the way you hear my confession "I'll tickle you" when you come to me to confess.

All of these things and others which I dare not even hint at, especially in the first edition of a book like this, were shocking in the extreme to me. What made them

particularly so was the recollection of the continual harping and harping through all of the eleven years of my training for the priesthood at college and seminary upon modesty and purity—and upon more and more modesty and purity in season and out. “A true priest is ‘Another Christ,’ and like the First Christ he must be pure” we were told times innumerable as students. And just think! They taught us Logic, or the science of correct reasoning, and taught it well where I studied!

Oh! the irony of that course in Logic! Therein we were taught how to reason well. But, but, were we expected in later life, Cato-like, “to reason well”—reason well along some lines, at least? Were we ever expected to form that habit of laying the straight-edge of cold, time-tried and inexorable, Logic along side of all we ran across in the priesthood? Or were we to reason that in the light of what we really found there it were more reasonable “not to reason why” but just “to do and to die”—and to keep very quiet and pious-looking about it all too?

These and others began to be serious and constant questions with me then; and they continued to be long after. In my then great simplicity of heart if not of mind I began to put these questions before other priests. All I ever received by way of an answer were looks of pity, if not of contempt, for my ignorance. More than once, though, did I receive a rather forcible suggestion that I keep my mouth shut entirely along those lines if I ever wanted to make any real progress in the priesthood, or have any friends therein!

From my sad and most distressing musings upon all of these things during the absence of the pastor was I called away at his return in about nine weeks. And if there be anything like going from the frying-pan into

the fire, or from the Devil to the deep sea in priest-
hood I believe I had then already begun to be in
earnest—and it would seem that I have ceased to
do so since.

From the position of “just filling in” I could
during the absence of my second that he was
“taking the cure” I was sent to this poor,
miserable unfortunate had a reputation of
being a “dope-fiend.” I had session “dope-
fiend” more than once be rned, though,
that never before had sea of what the
words really mean.

For more than e, however, draw the
cloak of charity over f the disillusion-
ment and of the pain which it was my
lot to undergo there at astor. Suffice
it then to say that when, as ths of horror
by day and terror by night, unfortunate
priest, and when I had almost into the
grave with him and over the effect upon “the
faithful” I could still forgive him for fellow!
Among other things, he had a very pa chronic
ailment of body from which narcotics a l to
relieve him even temporarily. What agony d and
heart he might have had, too, and what he mig ally
have been trying to still with opiates, God alone sows.
I could judge only by his rambling talks and mutterings
over and over again upon the self-same sad and heart-
rending subjects when he was under the influence of
“dope” or coming out of it.

CHAPTER IX

THE FEAR OF "HIS LORDSHIP" IS WISDOM

My third pastor, with all his sad failings, was still a great friend of the then reigning Bishop, for whom it seems he was making some money; and my departure from his home was quite sudden. In the first place, the prolonged strain under which I had lived with that man brought upon me a complete physical as well as a nervous breakdown. In the second place, I had received a very peremptory order from "His Lordship," the Bishop, to pack up and get not only out of that town, but out of his diocese, or out of the state—and to stay out!

This order to leave thus was due to the fact that I had finally advised a committee of gentlemen of the congregation to take up their grievances with the Apostolic Delegate, or in other words, with the Pope's own personal representative in Washington, D. C. This advice had, by the way, been given only as a last resort, and when that same committee had all but been kicked out of the house by their own Bishop who just would not listen to a word of theirs about conditions in their home parish.

Now if there is one being in these United States which some Roman Catholic Bishops might seem to fear more than old Satan himself it is that same Apostolic Delegate, who has, it seems now, the direct whip hand over them in more than one case, and who does not fear to crack the whip for them now and then when it suits his purpose.

The very fact that Rome, prudent, cunning and wise Rome, has seen fit to send a man like that Apostolic

Delegate to these free and independent United States of America; and to send him with the powers which he has even over Bishops—this fact ought to be rather significant to all of those really intelligent Catholics who can and who will do a little thinking of their own. Rome seldom does a thing without a good and even an urgent reason, you know.

But to resume my story: Not knowing just what else to do after I had gotten such an order to move I sent that good Bishop a short note telling him that I was leaving for a complete rest at the beautiful country home of a friend of mine in another state, and that when sufficiently recuperated I would, through some rather influential friends of mine in Baltimore, take up his letter, and all that led up to it, with the Apostolic Delegate.

In a few days I received a very nice letter from that good Bishop. In this he told me that he hoped my health would soon improve, and improve permanently. In it, too, he asked me whether I "*cared* to take up work" at a church in a certain seaport town in his diocese which had the reputation of being very healthy, and to let him know when I felt well enough to go to work again, but to take things easy, and take plenty of time.

There was little else left for me to do then, of course, but to say "yes" to that good Bishop, and to go to that town when I felt quite well and rested again. Somehow I then felt really grateful to "His Lordship," the Bishop, for giving me a chance to go to what I then considered such a fine place. But little did I know at that time of Bishops and their ways and ways—and especially of their ways in dealing with their subjects who have no very conspicuous signs of a "fear complex" toward a Bishop, who may not only have power of actual enslavement, but of life or death over them even, by their power to order

them to go to certain places. My eyes had not yet been opened fully to the fact that there may be much wisdom at times in allowing a Bishop to think, at least, that a priest stands in real fear of him. My sight began to improve soon though, even if my wisdom did not, and all of this may be especially interesting to a liberty-loving citizen of these United States who really believes that no American citizen ought to be deprived of liberty, health or life except by due process of the civil law.

Unfortunately—for me, at least—I arrived at my new destination under rather inauspicious circumstances. It seems that my then new pastor had wanted to take a trip to his old home, and that he had expected me more than two weeks before, though the Bishop had left the time entirely with me, I thought from his letter. Besides, I had informed “His Lordship,” too, just when I expected to report at my new post of duty.

My first greeting from my new superior was not over-encouraging—not that I could notice at least. It consisted of an immediate and terrific tirade for not getting to that place sooner. I had never seen the man before, and all of this was quite interesting in the way of a start with him—and so were other things. The first of these “other things” was the man himself. He was rather tall and thin, of a naturally pale complexion, I thought, and he wore quite long and almost white and straight hair.

As he fussed and fumed away without giving me a chance to explain, I noted that his hands trembled like those of one afflicted with the palsy, and his face at times became unnaturally flushed. After he had raged and raged for more than half an hour without granting me an opportunity to put in a word he became worse than incoherent and later really inarticulate. All of a sudden he quit, and just left me. This was at exactly eight

o'clock in the morning, and I saw no more of him until supper, at seven the evening of the same day.

Meanwhile the housekeeper had shown me to my room, and had quietly left me to my own reflections—and I reflected a lot! At supper my new pastor seemed more calm, and his speech was more articulate and direct. Though I could detect no more flushes I observed that his hands still trembled much, especially when he tried to raise a glass of iced tea to his rather parched and cracked-looking lips. He broke silence by telling me that he had just awakened from a long and refreshing sleep, and that he now felt much better. This I was indeed glad to learn.

Not so very glad though was I to learn that he wanted an assistant priest only on Saturday afternoons and Sunday mornings, and that on all other days I could be gone, and gone as far away as I wanted. In other words, as I interpreted his remarks, my absence would be far more agreeable to him than my presence around that place, except at the times he mentioned.

As I listened to and digested his remarks, and as I studied the man more I began to be profoundly sorry for him. My real sorrow and pity became more intense when I learned from various sources that he was a most disappointed, soured and almost broken-spirited priest with little left in him except a curious mixture of a residue of real piety and a lot of absolute venom.

It seems that after long and trying years of hardships he had succeeded in lifting a really heavy financial burden from the church at which he was located, and that he had put that church on a really stable foundation. It seems, too, that he did not feel himself sufficiently appreciated for all of this, either by his congregation or by the Bishop. This doubtless gave him much and keen

sorrow, and it appeared that he was getting, now and then, at least quite a bit of "surcease of sorrow" from "spiritual" sources other than those afforded by religion.

Since I was then not especially wanted the next day there at that rectory I decided to visit some other priests who were stationed at St. J. church in that same town. The first priest whom I met there was the assistant. We were both strangers to each other. When I had introduced myself and told him just where I was then located he looked at me with amazement first, and then with what I interpreted as heart-felt pity.

As he saw that I was rather embarrassed by his looks and by his silence he very considerably began to talk. He started by asking me what in the name of God I had ever done to a Bishop to be sent by him to such a man as my new pastor—by way of punishment I presumed. This question and a few remarks of that reverend assistant there proved quite interesting, if not entirely encouraging to me then.

I was told that my new pastor was the very hardest man in the whole diocese to get along with, and that no Bishop without a fearful grudge against him would send a priest, and above all, a priest less than three years ordained, to such a pastor. On the one hand, he told me this new pastor of mine would never do anything except to make life unbearable at home for me if I stayed there much; and on the other, if I visited around the parish at all, he would just make it worse—especially for me, whom he now knew to be "on the outs" with the Bishop.

I was told, moreover, that the man had shown "evident signs" of insanity more than once, and that my predecessor as assistant had been drowned the previous summer in a way rather unusual, and possibly not accidental. The fact of this drowning of the priest who

preceded me at that place can be easily verified, I may remark in passing; but that it was a case of suicide brought on by despondency over his being assistant to such a pastor I have most serious doubts.

Among the things mentioned as signs of the mental disintegration of that poor unfortunate pastor of mine—but mentioned only as a joke, I then believed—was the fact that after he had gotten his congregation for years used to paying a specified sum each month to clear the church debt, and after they had paid this debt and could keep on paying without missing the money much, he just let them off when he could have gotten much more money out of them all so easily!

It seems that when that pastor thus “let down” upon his people the entire revenues of the church began to fail to such an extent that even the Bishop felt the decrease considerably when his “cathedraticum,” or what some have so very impiously called the “Bishop’s rake off,” was yearly sent in. This, of course, could not be very agreeable to a money-loving Bishop.

Just how much truth there was in that assertion that my then pastor had shown “evident signs” of insanity more than once the reader may judge for himself from the quite easily demonstrable fact that that poor unfortunate priest did really become insane, and that he died in an insane asylum a short distance from Baltimore, where more than one other insane priest has died—and where more than one other insane priest most likely is today. Just why so many priests have gone insane, and some violently so, and died insane, the reader will be left to judge for himself after reading all of this book carefully, and when he then gets a better idea of what really has caused the downfall of more than one “Other Christ.” A priest, you know, is not supposed to say much about

these and other most serious things, since the real fault, the real lese majesty, is not in being their cause, or in doing them, especially if one be a bishop or other superior, but in making them known, and *thus* "scandalizing the 'faithful.'"

As that poor, unfortunate former pastor of mine is dead, now, and since the poor wretch died in so terrible a place as an insane asylum, I shall just draw the veil of charity, too, over the horrors of the two years and six months which I went through with him. At the end of that time a new Pharoah arose in Egypt who knew not Joseph. In other words, the old Bishop died and a new one came into power there.

The new Bishop removed my old pastor during his first visit to him, and with his successor I remained almost three years. These were, though, three quite pleasant and busy years, and all too short years. My parting with my last pastor before I was called to a pastorate myself came about in a rather unusual manner, if I am correctly informed. It seems to have been due to the fact that a rumor had gotten to the new Bishop's ears that I could live on fifteen cents a day—and furnish the said fifteen cents myself—and that that Bishop had a place in his diocese in which he thought such a man might fit.

There is in our diocese a little "church" (just 25 x 40 feet) and a congregation which have met with a rather unique fate. The church was started by a priest who afterwards became an archbishop, and started upon ground acquired by a churchman who afterward became a very distinguished cardinal—and it was started more than fifty years ago! Though two other priests who had charge of this "church" became bishops; and though there were some thirty-odd thriving non-Catholic churches in that same town, and at least two hundred

in the territory which was served from that little "church," that one poor, pitiful pine-board structure and its congregation never seemed to thrive much, and served for comparatively little else than a stepping-stone for some priests to higher things in this world—or mayhap as a stumbling block for others to lower ones.

Though launched into life by vigorous "spiritual fathers," this one poor little "church" with its fourteen pews and congregation of ninety souls in a population of twenty-five thousand, was said to be suffering from "spiritual infantile paralysis." Priests came, and priests went; and the place seemed destined, like the brook, to go on for ever, in the same old way.

To make a long story short, that rumor that I could live so cheaply, and the fact that I loved to hunt and to fish and to camp out and "rough it," generally might seem to have caused the Bishop to invite me to take up this little "church" and a number of missions in more than eight thousand square miles which were attached to it. For better or for worse I volunteered to go where that Bishop did not appear over anxious to order another priest, and as nearly as I can reckon it, I was the twenty-seventh priest who undertook to work there in one way or another in a half century.

CHAPTER X

BEANS, BILIOUSNESS—AND THE BLUES

Before leaving my fifth pastor to take up a pastorate of my own I was given by him some very valuable information regarding my new position, the place in which I had to make my home, and the kind and the peculiarities of the people I would have to live and to work among. All of this and more that good priest could well do, as he himself had once been in charge of the immense parish of more than eight thousand square miles to which I was going, and he had done really efficient and lasting work there.

Somehow, as my good old friend went on to tell me certain things about the place I felt that he just must be "drawing the long bow," and be trying to do worse than to joke about what I would have to contend with where I was going. That he was quite a joker in a way I knew well. Hence I began to take the whole thing as a joke. I went on taking the whole thing as a joke, too, until he started to dictate some notes about the situation, which notes I afterwards found to be really invaluable.

Then, as my informant grew more and more serious, I began to see less and less of a joke in it all. I saw less still of a joke when I learned that at no time had he been able to get more than \$450.00 out of all of the people at that church to which I was going in any one year—and from all sources and for all purposes.

After giving me all of this valuable and very encouraging information my dear old friend wound up by telling me that he wished me luck, but that he gravely

feared that I would starve. Had he but said that he feared that I would starve or meet with some far, far worse evil than starvation if I remained in my new position long enough, he would have been much, very much nearer to the truth. In fact, he would have been telling the exact truth.

My one, leading, and all-absorbing idea when I took up my position as pastor was to get results—and to get worth-while results in a place in which so very little had ever been accomplished for the Catholic Church in all of those long, long years of a half century or more. Little did I dream then, though, of what it may mean to try to get real results for souls, and for the Catholic Church, even, in a place where so many other priests have failed to do so; and when among those priests who had just let the place slide on, but who carefully raised themselves to “higher things” in this world had been—my own Bishop!

I arrived at my new and fateful if not really fatal destination on that dark, damp and chilly St. Patrick’s day morning of 1915; and I was not long in receiving information which more than confirmed all of that which my former pastor had given me. Some rather officious members of my new congregation attended quite promptly to that.

Among other things which I learned was the fact that my “parish” extended over a territory as large or larger than the entire state of New Jersey; that in all of this otherwise thriving country there was not one real Catholic church, and not one Catholic school, whilst there were in it some two hundred prospering Protestant churches, and a number of non-Catholic educational and other institutions.

The nearest thing to a real Catholic church in that

simply immense and otherwise thriving section was that miniature one (25 x 40 feet) of pine boards in the city of ——— in which I was to make my home. Even that little church, and the rectory nearby, were in none too good a state of preservation. Moreover, neither was at all well furnished. The "church" lacked much in the way of proper equipment—and the rectory lacked more. It was almost bare, in fact. And all of that and more after a half century! What abject need for real work there I thought!

Little was there around which could cheer in the least—especially among the Catholic people whom I met. Most of these were from the first quite clearly averse to having another resident pastor; and some were none too reserved in letting me know that. All of these things were none too comforting and encouraging. About the only cheering things I could find around on that chilly and dreary first morning after I got rid of my Job's comforters with more or less politeness was a can of beans, a box of crackers and some coffee and sugar. These were not fresh, but they were good—so good in fact that after warming the beans and making a cup or two of coffee I really felt cheered when I had made my first meal there of these viands.

I was indeed really cheerful for a while, then, or at least I tried pretty hard to be. I was not so very cheerful though in a few days after dining rather exclusively off of beans, crackers and coffee—the cheapest and most easily prepared food I could find. Soon I began to be a bit indisposed; and in a short time I was worse—biliously worse. On top of all of that I contracted a severe cold which laid me up for two weeks. You see I was not accustomed to keeping up a fire, and I became thoroughly chilled several times. Ever before had my

physical wants been looked after by a housekeeper. Now they had to be looked after—by myself!

During that inauspicious illness of two weeks I had plenty of time for meditation—and for the blues—in that cold, bleak and lonesome old house. However, I soon began to mend, and with returning health came back cheerfulness and a desire for—more beans! Beans and more beans seemed to fill an aching void; and I then had quite a large one.

What I wanted to do first after I felt well enough was to get around once over my whole territory. My idea was to gather more complete data so I could analyze the entire situation better, and lay plans to improve it all if possible. When my first investigation of the entire field and of its people was over I began to meditate and to reason somewhat as follows:

The “Roman Catholic” church might seem, at least, to be an exotic, and a very exotic sort of a thing in this country. Like a plant taken up and out of its place of origin and of its own nativity and carried to another part of the world and into a different climate the “Roman Catholic” church must have many and varied forms of attention and labor bestowed upon it, and it must have various facilities for propagation and maintenance which the more indigenous forms of religion do not seem so much to require to make them take root and to prosper.

Besides live and hard-working priests the “Roman Catholic” Church requires an impressive church building, a good organ, gorgeous vestments, beautiful altar-vessels, a magnificent altar and other things with which to impress and to help hold the “faithful.” Above all, though, there must be a Catholic school. A Catholic school is an absolutely indispensable requisite for a properly func-

tioning Catholic church or congregation. In such a school only can this exotic form of religion, like a hot-house plant, be made properly to germinate and to thrive well until its subject is large and strong enough to be set out into the church proper for the priests to act upon more directly.

Now one of the things which a student for the Roman Catholic priesthood learns well, or is supposed to learn well, I believe, in his study of Ontology (a branch of Scholastic Philosophy) is what is called there the "Principle of Causality." In other words, he is taught to believe and to know—if not constantly and everywhere to observe—that there is, and that there just must of necessity be a very close and a very intimate connection or relation between cause and effect.

If, for example, certain desired things are well known to be only the effects of clearly known causes, and can come into existence in no other way except through these causes, then those who sincerely want those things, or those effects, must be honestly willing, and must strive to put into operation the only known causes of the desired effects. To reason otherwise might seem to be on a parity with the absolute folly of trying to get blood out of a turnip.

In other words, and by way of illustration, a successful "Roman Catholic" parish or congregation is an effect. It is an effect of causes in the shape of the labor of priests, sisters and brothers or others with proper facilities in the church and school—and above all in the school. The school, you know, reaches not only the children, but often their elders through the children.

Therefore it seemed to me that if a "Roman Catholic" Bishop really wanted a successful parish in a territory where there was none, but in which there were some two

hundred thriving Protestant churches, then that Bishop just must intelligently and honestly desire to have there the only known causes of that effect known as a successful "Roman Catholic" parish. Thus did I reason and reason—but I reasoned without mine Episcopal host!

True, I might have had some more or less correct ideas of true reasoning, but I had no idea at all of what a "Roman Catholic" Bishop could or would do under certain circumstances. Still less of an idea had I then of the frightful consequences of all of that to me, and to others present and future. Had I known, or been able, even, vaguely, to imagine only a part of those terrible things which were in store for me for wanting to, and for really trying to do what seemed the only logical thing I would probably have had far worse an attack of the "blues," and a much more acute as well as lasting one than has ever been brought on by beans and biliousness.

CHAPTER XI

A LITTLE LOGIC A DANGEROUS THING

It was Huxley, I believe, who said that "Logical consequences are the scare-crows of fools and the beacons of wise men." Somehow I imagine I was thinking of all this when in the early days of my pastorate I thought that my Logic was going to be that beacon which would direct to success my efforts to give the "Roman Catholic" Church a fair start at last in those eight large counties which then formed my parish.

Little then did I in my simplicity even dream of the real ways, and of the wiles and the true animus of a "Roman Catholic" Bishop under certain circumstances. Circumstances are said, I believe, to alter cases; and it might seem as though they could, too, under given conditions, not only alter, but actually annihilate Logic.

But in the then still profound depths of my ignorance of some things I set right to work doing just exactly what my logical conclusions had directed me to. It was self-evident that the negligence and worse of fifty years could not be made up for in a year and a day. So though I was eager I was deliberate in going at things in a to me logical order; and the very first things that seemed to need attention were—the people of my little and scattered congregations. These good people, and especially those in the town in which I made my home, presented an interesting, even if a very sad, study, to me at least.

To give some idea of their state of mind with regard to priests I must say that I had not been among them

twenty-four hours before I was asked bluntly how soon I was going to leave. Moreover I was told clearly that the Catholics of that particular town did not want another resident priest, and that they just WOULD NOT SUPPORT ONE because of the way that more than one had acted there.

When I gave them to understand that I, for one, HAD NOT COME there TO BE SUPPORTED, but TO HELP SUPPORT THEM in an effort to get a decent church and a school for their children some grew rather sarcastic and wanted to know what the good was of "this Mass-going business every Sunday" that I wanted to inculcate. If there were really so much in it why had they not had Mass every Sunday all of these long, long years when a priest came only once in a while, and then did not always come sober or always remain sober after he came, I was asked. At times, I was informed, when a priest did come, "half of the people were not notified, and the other half did not care whether they were or not." At one time, when a certain woman and a man who afterwards gave me much trouble, expatiated at great and very vehement length upon the number of priests who had been known to drink there, I was severely tempted to tell them that such conduct toward a priest and especially toward one who, like myself, was a total stranger to them, was enough to drive one to drink. However, I didn't do that.

All of the foregoing and many other things proved very interesting, even if so sad and not over-encouraging for a start. What proved more interesting still was the way certain of the laity decided to run the church and the rectory.

To go into particulars about how two "prominent" Catholics endeavored really and literally to "starve and freeze me out," and how the Bishop came unrequested to

my rescue when I let it be known that if I were ever found frozen there it would be frozen right upon my post of duty—to go into particulars about these things and the open, loud and public insult I had to endure from this source for a long time whenever I got up to preach at Mass, would be worse than boring. Suffice it then for the present, at least, to say that all of these painful things and others gave me much to study and to reflect upon; and that long and often did I study and reflect upon the contrast of the conduct toward a priest of this poor and long worse than neglected congregation, and that of a congregation which had fared differently at the hands of priests.

During the time that I was studying these things I was also studying something else—and that was the quickest and most effective manner in which all of those painful and deplorable conditions could be corrected. It was self-evident that real and lasting means had to be radical to be of real value. //

The best known means, the best causes, in other words, of the good effects I so much desired to see there were a real Catholic church with regular Mass, Sunday-school and all else—and a Catholic school. But where to get the money for all of these things?—that was the question.

My only means of getting money was my trusty old pen. Somehow I felt that if by means of that pen I could turn the searchlight of publicity on the conditions as I found them there, and then asked for help to improve them, at least, some good Catholics would come to my aid, and that my Bishop, along with a lot of priests who are supposed to be interested in souls, would be highly pleased—almost as highly pleased as I felt Almighty God would be with my best efforts in so very deplorable a case.

In such a frame of mind I began to write a series of articles for a certain well-known Catholic Review. The first five articles of this series were intended to be mere "feelers" of both the laity and of the clergy—to say nothing of my Bishop. They dwelt, therefore, mostly upon the beauty, the advantages and the promises of the place, and upon the opportunities of the Catholic Church there. Along with these there was a peep now and then into the humorous side of the life of a wandering Catholic home missionary; and there was a humorous side for me—then.

These articles ran in that Review off and on for three years; and whilst they seem to have created quite a bit of favorable comment, they did not make money fast enough for my purpose, though they made some. The first notable effect of that money which they did make was a howl from two members of the congregation. These two worthies, if I was correctly informed, accused me of "pauperizing" the people of that church by making publicly known the fact that most of them were not sufficiently gifted with this world's goods to build a church of their own. As a result I received a rather peremptory order from one of them to "stop those dirty little articles."

My reply was, with the Bishop's express permission at first, a launching out into straight-forward paid advertisements for help. These advertisements were run for three years in all of the Catholic papers which would take them at regular paid advertising rates, and some Catholic papers refused to publish them at any price. Whilst I am not certain, it might seem that those behind these particular papers did not want any poachers upon the financial preserves of their arch-dioceses.

As I had had quite a little experience in that kind of a

thing, and since I had for many years read and studied well everything I could find on newspaper advertising, my advertising venture along this particular line began, by degrees, to be quite successful. Though my bills ran as high as five hundred dollars a month sometimes I made an average clear profit of one thousand dollars a month for more than four years.

When the profits began to come in such volume the Bishop himself, who was at first quite skeptical, might seem to be the first to be attracted by them. This I judged by the way, and the most earnest way, in which he urged me to let him have the use of that money. This I agreed to do when he promised me—upon his word of honor I supposed—to give me, as pastor, six per cent on all that money, and to give me notes for it payable “on demand.” That Bishop promised me, too, that not one cent of our money would ever be invested in any kind of stocks or bonds, but that it would all be loaned to needy priests of the diocese, and thus “kept in the family” as he expressed it.

Things began to look more and more encouraging for quite a while until it might seem that some apparently money-mad priests in Northern and Western dioceses began to imagine that my articles and advertisements were taking immense sums out of their parishes. All of that was quite flattering to me, and my one regret was and is that it was not true.

My venture into print along the advertising line seems to have caused quite a lot of priests to complain to the editor of a certain Catholic “harmonizing” sheet of comparatively large circulation which I used considerably at first, and paid more than three thousand dollars for this privilege. This editor—who is now a Bishop, by the way—depended largely upon priests to circulate his

sheet. For this and other reasons he refused to publish any more ads for me, it might appear.

It does not appear though that complaining priests had very much trouble in convincing that then priest-editor and now Bishop, that he ought to stop running my well-paid-for advertisements. The reason might seem to be that he himself had then quite a few financial irons of his own in the money-getting fire of advertising in his own paper. These irons he did not appear anxious to have cooled off by an intruder like me.

Not content with closing his columns to more advertising of mine this editor, who has "harmonized" himself into the ranks of the Bishops, or gotten there otherwise, complained to my Bishop about a circular of information regarding him and his paper which I sent out to all of those who enquired why my ads no longer appeared in his paper.

All of these things, plus the fact that in my advertisements I was beginning "to call a spade a spade" began to have a curious and interesting effect upon that Bishop of mine. He could not deny a word I had said anywhere in print or out of it. Moreover, he did not at first seem, and just by a mere coincidence, he did not seem disposed to stop such a flow of money as I had started—as long, at least, as I let him and his "Very Reverend Chancellor" handle all that money that came as a profit for the sweat of my poor brain.

This money I did let them handle, and handle just as long as the Bishop's word to me was kept that none of it was to be invested in stocks or bonds, but that it would be loaned to needy priests of the diocese on notes payable to me as "pastor," "on demand," and given or endorsed by that same Bishop himself.

Just as soon, though, as I learned for certain that some

\$5,500 of our money had been invested in some kind of stocks or bonds by the Bishop's "Very Reverend Chancellor" I refused point blank to send any more money in to headquarters. And again in my inexperience with the episcopacy I reasoned wrongly. I had just used a little Logic once too often it might seem, and concluded that my Bishop's word, like my own, was given to be kept. How really dangerous a thing this little Logic on my part proved to be, though, will soon be evident.

CHAPTER XII

STIRRING UP A HORNET'S NEST

Like everything else worth while which I started and did in those days I began my advertising campaign in the name of God—and I continued it in His Holy Name. This was because I still felt myself a priest of God then; a true priest, just like I used to feel, and because I still had a real zeal not only for souls, but for the advancement of the “Roman Catholic” Church.

Those poor souls under my care, and especially those who acted so badly toward me, their pastor, were the especial objects of my zeal, poor things! They had, it seems, long and often been priest-forsaken if not priest-abandoned and betrayed. I just felt, though, that they could not be even God-forsaken just because so little had ever been done for them by priests.

The very thought of them and of their pitiful condition, as well as of the state of the Catholic Church in all of that vast and otherwise very flourishing region, just made me resolve to work more ardently and to do any and every really honest thing in my power to give the Church a good and a speedy start among them, especially by means of a good Catholic School, cost what it might to me.

In the course of my advertising campaign which I carried on absolutely alone to help these poor unfortunate people, I learned more and more curious things about priests and Bishops—some priests and Bishops at least. Not a few of these were startling—and some were actually paralyzing to me: and paralyzing in the extreme.

A rather formidable bulk of letters from the laity in some parts of the North and of the East, and a few from the Middle West, to which my advertising had extended and interested priests as well as people, seemed to prove that there is quite a notable number of parochial and diocesan priests and bishops where there ought to be more Catholic priests and bishops—and that there are some pretty narrow, selfish and very vindictive ones among them. Such might seem to be the case if those unsolicited letters tell the truth about such clergymen that have completely disgusted many of the laity, some of whom are beginning at last to muster up enough courage to write and to talk a little.

Many of those bitterly complained about ecclesiastics are not only everlastingly talking money and more money to the greater exclusion of God and of holy things in their churches and trying to get all of the money they can, it seems, but they absolutely forbade their people to send a cent out of their parishes without their (the priest's) permission. This prohibition, by the way, will give a better insight into the power and the tyranny, if not the cupidity of some Catholic churchmen, which they exercise over Catholics who are supposed to be free citizens of these United States, the "Land of the Free and the Home of the Brave."

And some of these very priests and bishops might seem too often to be the ones to deny first and last and all of the time, and very vehemently, that "Roman Catholics" are ever "priest-ridden," or hood-winked by the priesthood! It might be interesting in this connection to ask, and really to try to find out, by what law of God or of our Country a "Roman Catholic" priest or Bishop can COMMAND a supposedly free and independent citizen of these United States not to give his own, and may be his

own hard-earned money, to any proved worthy cause he wishes. Is a Bishop's fiat ever above the civil law, and if so, can it be extended to things more serious and far more valuable than money? Why not try to learn?

The machinations of some of these jealous, money-loving and power-loving priests, and even their open attacks upon me, and upon my work, became so serious and so irritating that I got out an edition of fifteen thousand of a pamphlet entitled "Should Catholics Act Thus Toward Their Southern Catholic Brethren?" The object of this was to set me and my labours, and the reason of them, more clearly before the eyes of some, who seem to have been misled.

In this pamphlet I endeavored to give a brief survey of conditions as I had found them in my parish, along with a clear idea of just what I wanted money for. Besides, I let it be known, and rather emphatically, that I kept fairly well posted, by means of absolutely unsolicited letters from the laity, on just how some priests and others had tried to deprive my needy work of money—and exactly why!

In addition to this I called rather forcible attention to the compliment paid to all of the Catholic papers which were carrying my articles and advertising by having any Catholics, and especially priests, to say, or to intimate, even that these good papers were carrying fraudulent advertising, and were carrying it for money. I concluded all by inviting my most avaricious clerical friends to investigate before talking further, and to prosecute me if I were a fraud.

Not all of the remarks in my rather unique and somewhat sarcastic pamphlets pleased some priests over much, it seems. They did not please them any more than did my remarks in another pamphlet in which I called at-

tention to the way millions upon millions of dollars were being gotten out of Catholics in one quite cunning and plausible way or another, for a showy "shrine" or other things, whilst there was such a dearth of Catholic schools and real churches in the South and elsewhere. I said nothing in any of these pamphlets though about the seeming possibility that any priest or bishop could remotely appear, at least, to be getting a pretty "fat rake off" on some of this money for himself.

As a consequence of all of these and other things, more and more priests were reported to me as not only doubting my orthodoxy—and I hadn't said a word about Faith, even if I had hit the financial morals of some a few love taps—but to be dubious about whether I was a "regularly ordained" priest, and if so, whether I was just "sui compos"; or to express that Latin rather mildly, whether I was really and well in possession of my mental faculties or not. Most especially does this latter thing seem to have been the case when I called attention to the fact that even a priest may be bound to restitution when he has been guilty of slander and some other serious things.

Many of these and other things began by degrees to get to the ears of my Bishop. For some time, and again as just a mere coincidence, of course, he said nothing to ME, and he took no action as long as I continued to send in more and more money to him or to his "Very Reverend Chancellor." The first thing which that Bishop did say to me though was that he would appreciate it if I were to leave out a postscript to some of my newspaper ads. which he himself had given me permission to use. This postscript read: "Published with the permission of the Rt. Rev. Bishop of X"; and where I have inserted the "X" here I had the real name of his diocese.

It is doubtless likewise only one of the merest of coincidences that nothing was ever said, TO ME AT LEAST, by that Bishop about stopping my advertisements until I had refused point blank to send in any more money; and this I did only when I was certain that that Chancellor had invested \$5,500 of our money in those stocks or bonds, the very names of which he has not even to this day deigned to let me know.

After the Bishop himself had given me his own solemn word of honor, as I believed, that my hard earned money would be used for a much different purpose, one can well imagine my astonishment when I learned that the reason I had not received four notes for one thousand dollars each and one for fifteen hundred dollars, for money which I had been sending in at intervals of about a month, was that that money had been invested by the Chancellor in a very different way from what I expected, and the Bishop had pledged.

My absolute and paralyzing dismay just cannot well be imagined, though, when I learned something far worse some eight months later, and after I had put in some very respectful, but still vigorous protests, about these investments on the part of that "Very Reverend Chancellor" who, it seemed, was quietly gaining a powerful influence over that Bishop. One of my vigorous protests to the Bishop was intercepted by that Chancellor who rather imprudently returned it to me with some quite sarcastic remarks over his own signature. This I still have on file.

This underling and "right-hand man" of the Bishop's is a German with a to me really Prussianizing instinct. He is rather capable along some lines, and especially along those of hard labor. Somehow he seemed to have a strong leaning toward the position of "Chancellor,"

which in his country of origin—Germany—is considered, I believe, quite an enviable one by priests of a certain type, as it may bring them into closer contact with their letters. In this country, though, I have more than once heard the position of “Chancellor” referred to as that of the “Bishop’s Bootlicker.”

This particular “Chancellor,” whom for the lack of a better and more appropriate pseudonym I shall call “Kalph,” is well built and not over tall. He speaks English with an interesting German accent which is just slightly tintured with a little of the Irish “Brogue.” This Irish in his English is perhaps due to his having been the assistant of an Irish priest soon after he first came to this country.

It has been to me rather amusing more than once to hear this “Kalph” talk, and to note, not only his peculiarity of manner, but his curious bent of mind, and his apparent, at least, lack of the saving sense of humor. Particularly has this been the case when with one breath he has threatened to “expose” my “insulting letters” to the Bishop, in which I had clearly but always very respectfully told that Bishop what I thought ought to be done to help matters where I was located—and then, with the very next breath, when I had threatened to do a little “exposing” myself, he professed to be my friend, my real friend, my “best friend!”

This “Very Reverend Chancellor” seemed to me, at least, to want to run and to rule things in a manner quite Prussian; and it might appear that one like me at least, who did not and could not be made to bow low to his desires was perhaps marked for something akin to retribution if not to vengeance. That fact was most deeply impressed upon me, especially on the very day this book was begun, the ninth day of April, 1926.

It might seem that whilst this good Chancellor appeared rather strenuous in his dealing with some, he was quite subservient to the Bishop, and that he helped him in various ways, and especially financially. Among other things, which he appears to have done was to get the Cathedral, the Bishop's own church, on a paying basis, and to insure as far as possible, the payment of the "Cathedraticum," or of the Bishop's personal tax upon each parish of the diocese—a tax, which by the way I would never, and have never paid.

The Bishop's personal income might seem thus to have been somewhat increased. All of this and other things appear to have pleased that Bishop quite a bit, since I myself have heard him praise rather highly the financial sagacity of "My Kalph" (only he referred to him by his real and more adult name). It could seem, too, that this and other service on the part of that "Very Reverend Chancellor" might have been the cause of the clearly expressed desire, I believe, of the Bishop to have his "Kalph" succeed him in office.

As that "Very Reverend Chancellor" is of German birth, and since I am of German descent but born in this good old State of Virginia where my family has now been unto the fourth generation, it looked more than once like a sort of a case of "Greek meeting Greek."

Instead of a "tug of war," though, there came for me something far worse. There came, as a coincidence if not a consequence, real disaster—an absolute catastrophe, after opposing him and thus opening, as it were, a veritable Pandora's box, as well as stirring up a sort of hornet's nest."

CHAPTER XIII

OUT OF THE MOUTH OF A BABE

That I am slow and rather loth to learn some things—especially when they are painful and disturbing—is by this time doubtless evident to the reader. However, when it becomes a real and an unavoidable necessity to learn them I think I can go Walter Scott one better and not only acquire knowledge from a stable-boy, but from a babe, a mere babe as well.

In fact, it was from a real babe, a real sacerdotal babe, at least, in the shape of a young man then just recently ordained to the priesthood, that I learned some of the most terrifying and distressing things about that same priesthood which, with one exception, and that when afterwards dealing with my own Bishop, it has ever been my most sad misfortune to know. And it all came about thus:

For a long while, and especially since my third assignment as assistant priest, when I had that first complete collapse, I have been subject, at times, to a rather serious and painful form of gastric and intestinal trouble. Whatever the real cause, the malady seems to be much improved now and then after a complete rest in bed with first a very slim, and then with a well chosen but bountiful diet. -

Two years ago this April—the month I first complained about the investment of our money contrary to the word of the Bishop—I felt one of the most serious attacks of all of my old trouble coming upon me. So severe was this attack threatening to be that I made ap-

plication to the Bishop for an assistant priest; and I got him—the following September, just five months after, and when I was more dead than alive!

Meanwhile, and in spite of my constant illness, and almost continually severe pain, I had a very busy summer of it, both in town and on the country missions. In about the worst place anything like that could happen I was the victim of an attack of something like acute indigestion; and the place of all places in which I met with this was the sacristy, or the little room behind a lone country mission church sixty-five miles from town, ten miles from the nearest railroad station—and a half mile from the nearest living human being.

There were the remains of a lot of dead human beings in that graveyard just out of the window in that little room in which I usually slept there—but they were poor company at such a time. More than once during those three long and painful days and nights which I had to spend there entirely alone, and with little else except baking-soda and water for medicine—more than once did I then wonder just where my own poor bones would rest among those graves so very close by. Well, they are not there—yet. When I felt better I literally dragged myself down to the main high-way about two hundred and fifty feet away. There I was most fortunately picked up by one of our own people, who, like the rest, had thought that I had gone to the railroad station with the mail-man early in the morning after the night I was taken so ill.

Upon my return home I was still so ill that I had to remain abed several days, and I was advised by my physician to return to Baltimore and again to consult a specialist. Just at that time, when I was feeling so very miserable, my new assistant arrived; and he seemed to

come with a sort of grudge. This could have been due to his having been pulled out of a place he liked much, and sent to one like me.

As soon as possible I left for Baltimore after placing all of my private papers in my safe-deposit box in a local bank. Before leaving, though, I gave this new assistant of mine an insight into much of the situation which for years I had been encountering and trying to improve. Moreover I suggested, among other things, that he be rather discreet in his dealings with a certain woman who, because of her officiousness had given me considerable concern, if not real trouble; and who threatened to give more, it seemed. This was, among other things, because I had more than once made it quite plain to her and others that I alone was burdened with the responsibility for that church; that she had little or nothing to do with it; and that she was rather far from being its financial main-stay, as some now disillusionized non-Catholics once seemed to think.

I was gone just three weeks; and I was not long in learning upon my return, much improved in health, that my young priestly help-mate had, apparently, at least, made a rather close scrutiny of all that he could find around the rectory, where I had left little, especially in the way of my private letter files, which could interest him. It might appear, too, that he had made some quite pleasurable visits to the home of my very dear woman friend who was so delighted at my way of running things.

By degrees it seemed evident to me that there was something akin to a little "method in his madness." In other words, it began to look as though my assistant had not only come to assist, but that there was at least a seeming possibility that he had been sent by someone to

keep rather a close eye upon me and mine; and that that someone could be—the “Very Reverend Chancellor.”

Now among those who seemed to look upon the then “Chancellor” as the future Bishop, and who wished for his own reasons, apparently, at least, to become something like a satellite of his, even if not to do his will in all things was—that dear young “Other Christ” of an assistant of mine. This callow youth of a priest, this sacerdotal babe, had impressed me right from the day he came as being one who would never over-exert himself or endure much real hardship for Church, for souls, or for God Himself; but who might be ever on the lookout for a soft and good-paying berth for himself in the priesthood.

At first I contented myself with just pitying a poor young priest who thus early in his career had, apparently at least, allowed himself to become so much attached to money for himself, and who was already leaning so very parasitically on others with an eye upon promotion, instead of trying to learn how to stand upon his own feet and fight his own battles like a real man.

All of a sudden I became aware of the fact that my young sacerdotal friend, my youthful “Other Christ” of an assistant, knew quite a bit about things which I supposed to be professional secrets between the Bishop and myself alone. He seemed to know, for example, that, and why, that good Bishop had failed five out of eight times to come to my little church to give Confirmation, and had thus caused not only a lot of serious embarrassment to me, but real hardships to the poor children, and to the parents of those poor children, who at various times had been well and long prepared, and had come quite a long way over rough roads to be confirmed—and had found no Bishop there to give Confirmation!

In actual fact, my rather loquacious assistant was at no little pains to tell me that I was a fool, and a big one, the very first time the Bishop came down to confirm—that I was a fool then “to offer him a check” for the money I had raised “to defray his expenses.” What I should have done, according to this sapient young “Other Christ,” was not to be fool enough to offer that Bishop a check, but to be wise enough to raise all of the money I could, and then just to slip it, in the shape of big and untraceable bills, right into his grip when he was not looking. A check, it seems, is too much of a “give way,” and some Bishops, it appears, just don’t always want them when it becomes a question of giving them money for themselves. They prefer the cash, it might seem, and plenty of it, too, may be.

It was evident that my young friend knew, too, that I had never sent in a “cathedraticum,” or what some have called the “Bishop’s rake-off” from the proceeds of the church each year. These and other things did I learn from time to time. My first impulse after listening to but a part of such talk, and especially about my folly in not subsidizing Bishop and future Bishop as it were and thus insuring a “pull” and more certain and swift promotion was to warn that young man that it might be more discreet for him not to talk of such things in my presence.

Upon more mature consideration, however, I decided to let him go ahead and just talk and talk so I could study him better and find out all I wanted to know about various things which were then becoming quite interesting—to me, at least. Little did I dream at first though how much, how very much I still had to learn—and from the mouth of such a person—a mere sacerdotal babe.

CHAPTER XIV

STILL LEARNING—AND FROM A “BABE”

Among the other things which my young babe of “Another Christ” just could not get out of his mind, and which he referred to rather frequently and emphatically, was the fact that I had deliberately refused to send the “Very Reverend Chancellor” any more money, even if that Chancellor had gone so counter to the absolute word of the Bishop, and had invested \$5,500 of our money as he did. According to him it just could make no difference to ME what that Chancellor did with that money—whether he speculated with it or not, I presume.

He was “Chancellor,” and he was not only “Chancellor,” but he was going to be the next Bishop, and our present Bishop was going to be made an Arch-Bishop—and I was preparing a pretty rough and hard berth for myself. Worse yet, I “would get it in some way” for not quietly, very quietly, offering a “fair-share” of all of that money, which came as a result of my literary and advertising ventures to the Bishop.

As a result of all of this and other things he just knew that I myself would never be allowed—that *some way* would be found to keep me from starting—to build that church and school, and that I would thus miss all of that money which “good” contractors, it might appear, sometimes give to priests and maybe to Bishops, who give them contracts, and who give in untraceable cash, and not in checks!

And still worse: I might be stopped by the Bishop from writing and advertising, and from thus making

more money; and if for no other reason than just because I spoke so plainly in my advertisements about the to me worse than deplorable conditions which I had run across in my vast parish.

Not one other of the many priests who had ever been in that same place had done anything like that—had dared to do it in fact—and just look how some of them rose in the world! Was I any better than they? Wasn't I an "unqualifiable fool" for even dreaming of attempting what a whole long line of priests, two of whom had become Bishops, and one an Arch-Bishop, had not even thought of? Did I think that a Bishop who himself had once been a pastor of this same place, and was now my own Bishop, would ever allow *me* to go ahead and build there, and thus show him up worse after I had already shown him up so "in the papers," and thus laid him open to possible charges of "maladministration of office"?

What chance did I now think I had with the next Bishop, the then "Chancellor," after finding so much fault with and getting after him so for definite information regarding those investments made with our money? And besides, he asked, what was I doing with "all of the money" then coming in? He had never seen my bank-book, check-book or account-books or "much else" anywhere. This last question and remark were also the last straw with me; and did worse than break a camel's back. They caused me to lose my temper at last—a thing I seldom do.

After my experience with that "Very Reverend Chancellor" and that \$5,500 I had just allowed whatever money that came in as a result of my rather strenuous advertising efforts to accumulate in the savings department of a local bank until I could get a priest of the diocese to take it off my hands on notes payable "on de-

mand" to me as "pastor." Some sixteen thousand dollars of this money I thus quietly loaned, by the way, to my old pastor-friend with whom I was just before I took up this pastorate of my own, and who, as the reader may recall, had ventured the prophecy when I left him that I would starve in my new field.

This quite interesting seance with my very sapient and rather bold babe of an assistant "Other Christ" took place early in December and less than three months after he had first come to me. Before going right at him "with gloves off" I thought it best to calm myself somewhat and to do a little more thinking, for few times had I ever been able to do anything worth while when really angry.

"Now here is a young priest, a young one of those "Other Christs," not yet six months ordained to the priesthood—and just look and listen at him," I said to myself. "How on earth did he get that way?"

Nowhere before had I gotten just exactly such ideas of what to do with money, and of how a "sensible" priest ought to raise himself in the eyes of his earthly "superiors" with it. True, I lacked ideas or information not only about these things, but also about several others. In fact, I had a fairly valid reason or reasons for not knowing very much, perhaps, about priests and bishops and their ways of doing various things.

The reason was that ever since my second appointment as assistant—to help out temporarily whilst the Reverend Pastor was away "taking the cure" for something like chronic alcoholism—I had, as more than one priest can testify, been keeping away from priests just as much as I possibly could; and I felt that I had a very good cause.

So much about priests that was to me worse than shocking had I learned from priests that I just didn't

want to learn any more. So very much about priests and their lapses from the moral law all the way from mere evil thoughts and desires and onanism, on through to fornication, adultery, and sodomy had I run across that I felt that if I ever preserved even the shreds of my once high ideals of the priesthood I would just have, in self-defense, to keep away from them just as much as possible. Not to parody Akempis in his marvelous book, "The Following of Christ," I very reluctantly grew to feel that every time I went out among priests I came back less a priest—and only the great God knows how very much I really wanted even then to be a priest, a good priest, a really genuine "Other Christ."

In endeavoring to preserve my once high ideals by keeping away from priests and not hearing too much which might injure or shatter them I failed, perhaps, to learn some things which might have been to my worldly advantage, whilst my young priestly friend and helper it seems had learned much in a pretty short time—and was making use of his knowledge.

In spite of myself all of this talk by my assistant just "made my blood boil." This was most particularly the case when that parasitical sacerdotal babe told me how badly a priest in a certain diocese "put his foot into it" on one occasion when his bishop came and drew a large crowd—and a big collection. It seems that that pastor had failed to put enough of that collection in cold, untraceable cash into the said bishop's suit-case. As a mere coincidence, if not a consequence, it might seem that that pastor did not last long in that good paying place, and that another, and a more liberal one to the Bishop was, after a while appointed, when, for some reason or other, the first one had had "trouble after trouble with his Bishop."

When I felt that I had sufficiently cooled off, and that the time was just right, I called my wise young assistant into my study, closed the door, and after confronting him with such facts and deductions as I saw fit I told him a few things which would not look nice in print. To say that he was rather obstreperous, contemptuous and defiant would be to express it all rather lamb-like.

Just what seemed to irk him most, though, was that I had dared to talk thus to one like him, like him who was "SUCH AN INTIMATE FRIEND" of the then "Very Reverend Chancellor" and the "future Bishop," who had sent him there—with plenipotentiary powers, I presume. The conclusion of his heated remarks was a very thinly if at all veiled threat of most direful vengeance which was to be wreaked upon me by "someone higher up."

All of this I paid little attention to at the time, as I did not even dream of the depths to which so newly ordained "Another Christ" could go with "the sacred oils of unction still moist upon his hands." Still less did I dream of dreaming of what fearful effects, of what worse than catastrophic consequences were to overtake me and change the whole course of my life as a mere coincidence if not a result of these and other things brought up by that strenuous bullock of a young priest. And how little did I then think that out of this and the other turmoils and travail of soul would come this very book you are now reading!

For a week or more I saw comparatively little of my assistant, except at mealtime when he was rather conspicuously taciturn and sullen. With no effort I learned, however, that when not writing long letters he was paying more than one visit to that woman whom I have mentioned before as having no special liking for me, and who had caused me quite a lot of trouble. What

went on between them can possibly be surmised from the sequel which runs through the remaining chapters of this book.

At the end of the week after I had spoken so plainly to my young and most pious sacerdotal friend he expressed a desire to go to X. Now X. represents the town in which the Bishop and that Chancellor lived; and I most readily granted him permission to go there—and to stay just as long as he wanted to. And he went, and he stayed—and he returned!

Immediately upon his return, and before he could go to his room to put away his grip and wash up a bit he, with really bullock-like impetuosity, almost flew at me to say that the Bishop wanted to see me at once; that he was going to stop me from “writing anything any more for the papers”; that such bold exposures as mine had too long been an insult to that very patient Bishop and to his “Very Reverend Chancellor,” and “that writing” of mine had just made the Bishop seem guilty of “maladministration of office”—and that it had made “ALL of the people” of my parish seem “poor and influential.” Interesting information was that!

To say that my most kind, and loving, and most holy assistant of “Another Christ” appeared vengeful as well as most pleasurable excited when telling me these and other very pleasant things, and that he finally just gloated over the sad expression which, despite my “poker-face” must have crept over my features, would be doing him a grave injustice. Would that the English, or any other language, contain words which could even remotely do justice to him as I saw and heard him then.

For a while I did nothing but keep quiet and think and think and feel more and more keenly the insult of that Bishop in taking up this matter with a mere underling,

instead of with me directly, as a really manly and business-like Bishop would most naturally and ordinarily do.

Think and think though as I would, I just could not recall, and I cannot yet recall, after going most carefully several times over all that I ever had said or written for publication that I had even once mentioned anything more or worse "in print" AFTER I had refused to let that Chancellor have any more money, than I had BEFORE, and when I was so long pouring in money at the average rate of one thousand dollars a month, as the result of the "sweat of my brain," and as the price of numberless hours of hard night work, both in writing for publication and in answering a vast volume of letters which all of my publicity work brought me. In view of the more and more pressing need, as I then thought, of that school and church I did not feel justified in using any of that money at that time so freely coming in to hire clerical help—and my loving assistant made it plain from the start that he "just wouldn't" help me with it, regardless of how it kept me up so often all night. He just came to do parish work, he said, and nothing more.

Before the return of my young priestly friend from that visit to the Bishop—or chiefly to his "Very Reverend" alter ego, I presume—I had thought that I knew at least something about "Roman Catholic" priests and bishops. But I was wrong—very, very wrong! I was just beginning to learn—and to learn from a sacerdotal babe—an interesting babe of "Another Christ," not yet six months ordained, but who had early learned how to "get in" with the "right kind" of "real" priests—which I have never learned, and never shall.

CHAPTER XV

LAST STATE WORSE THAN FIRST

The next morning after the return of my assistant found me in the city of X. The hour of nine-thirty of that morning found me in the office of my Bishop. It found me there because I had lost no time. I had made an engagement by long distance telephone.

"His Lordship," the Bishop, was waiting for me. He seemed rather flushed—doubtless with subdued anger. Though I at first felt great confidence in myself and in the success of my mission, I believe I was rather pale. A tell-tale mirror into whose depths I got but a glimpse as I passed it on my way to a chair to which the Bishop directed me gave me that idea that I might be pale.

After peering rather intently through the door by which I had entered, and after standing back of it a few minutes more as if carefully listening as well as looking, that good Bishop quietly closed that door, and as quietly turned the latch or key—I don't know which. Wise and very characteristic precaution all that, I thought later. Little chance then for an accidental witness of what was to transpire.

The Bishop then came forward, and before seating himself at his desk, just at my right, he stood quietly a few moments more as if still intently listening for something. Finally he sat down and wheeled his chair around, rather suddenly so that he could face me directly. I had been watching his movements and carefully trying to study his expression with my face rather averted, and through the "tail end" of my right eye—an old habit of

mine, and one which I think I must have acquired during my early days in the newspaper game.

For a few minutes "His Lordship" said nothing and just glowered and glowered upon me like some self-important school principal might scowl threateningly at a hapless urchin sent to him for correction. That look of his then, whilst scarcely terrifying to any real man, at least, had little in it of that quality of mercy which is not strained.

That good Bishop had for ten years or more been the "Rector" of a well known foreign college in which young men study and are trained for the priesthood. Moreover, he had been the head of a great Catholic university in America. For these reasons, probably, he had more than one of the usual stock of tricks of the school man. Then, too, he seemed to me to have a sort of penchant for the melodramatic, and especially so when it came to what he doubtless considered the startling situations in the atmosphere which he was most evidently endeavoring to create.

To intensify, if not to electrify, this atmosphere he just looked and looked at me in absolute silence, and most threateningly. All of this was most likely intended to have its terrifying and suppressing effect upon me before he broke that ominous silence.

Finally that Presiding Genius of the diocese cleared his throat, threw back his shoulders and broke his silence with a to me rather explosive sort of "Well!"—"Quite well," I countered, feigning to mistake his expletive for an interrogative. Thereupon he looked at me as with pity for not being able to understand that he was trying to be severe, and because I did not have intelligence enough to be much cowed thereby.

Next he asked whether I knew, whether I realized what

I had been doing. This particular question did not sound over-complimentary, and it raised my ire somewhat. However, he was Bishop, and I was then his subject. Prudence, therefore, reminded me that after all discretion is the better part of valor at times, and that that was the time of times.

As he began to talk, and then talked and talked away, I felt myself gradually regaining whatever composure I might have lost. I felt, in fact, I knew, that I had a strong case. In the simplicity of my heart, and with that courage which truth and righteousness and a good cause are wont to give, I felt well armed and equal to facing and to refuting most successfully anything in the way of real facts which he might bring up like a real man.

In my efforts to review and to arrange effectively all of the absolute and most easily demonstrable facts connected with the real reason for my strenuous and prolonged efforts to raise money for that most urgently needed school and church—in my efforts to do all of that well I had slept little on the train the night before. All of this reviewing I had done with the idea of being in a good position to marshall facts upon facts, whole legions of facts, if need be—and facts with their absolute and only logical conclusions.

But facts, absolute facts and logical conclusions from them, I soon learned, were just about the very last things in the world which that good Bishop wanted then. Little did he want me to give him such convincing things about all of the sad conditions which I had found in my immense parish, and which I had been trying so very hard to remedy by making them widely known and endeavoring thus to create interest in them on the part of good Catholics with a little money to spare.

When he began to storm so vigorously about my "imprudence" in turning the light of newspaper publicity upon the things which I had come into contact with I recalled to his mind the fact that he himself had given me permission to write, and to make money for that proposed church and school. I reminded "His Lordship" besides that after I had been quite successful in this work, and had thus bought and paid for what proved to be some very valuable property on which to build that same church and school he had himself given me his written promise of a thousand dollars as a reward and an encouragement of my work—a promise which I may here remark was never kept.

Rather imprudently, perhaps, I called attention to the further fact that I just could not write, and write with any reasonably grounded hope of interesting people and of getting some of their money without giving at least some truthful pen-pictures of what I had met with, but that I had not told the thousandth part about. Besides that I was probably not as wise as I might have been when I reminded him that up to a certain time I had sent to him every cent of my clear and hard earned profits from my poor pen.

Less wise still was I, may be, when I recalled to his mind the fact that I had ceased to send him any more money only when I learned that a much beloved underling of his in the shape of that "Very Reverend Chancellor" had, according to that Chancellor's own acknowledgment in writing to me, invested in some kind of stocks or bonds the very names of which he would not tell me (and never has told me) when he, the Bishop, himself, had given me his solemn word of honor that none of our money was thus to be invested, but was to be loaned to needy priests of the diocese at six per cent interest, and

loaned on notes payable to me "on demand," and endorsed by himself.

All of this on my part seemed but to add very explosive fuel to the fire. At the height of this raging fire "His Lordship" just came out flat-footedly and told me very forcibly and clearly that facts or no facts, needs or no needs, conclusions or no conclusions, he just wanted that "miserable and betraying writing" of mine to stop, and to stop at once! He even hinted that he wanted me to make some kind of an apology for it in the Catholic press. This he seemed later to realize that I just could not do without stultifying him as well as myself, as I had so often and so long run that line at the end of my advertisements saying that they were published with his own permission.

I was given to understand that that Bishop wanted my then rather well paying advertisements to cease chiefly if not entirely because the facts which I had put before the Catholic public about the long practically abandoned, and to me, at least, miserable, and to Heaven-crying conditions prevailing in my vast parish were just laying him open to the charge of "maladministration of the diocese"—and how familiar those last words sounded! He said nothing though about how all of that might interfere with his ambitions of rising still higher in the world.

"Rather late thought," I said; but I said it most inaudibly. I just felt that I had to say it to myself, at least, since all of these complained of things had been going on for several years, and because by just the merest of coincidences I may again remark, nothing had been said to me, at least, against my well-paying publicity efforts by that Bishop until nearly nine months after I had failed to send him any more money, and after I had

refused point blank to make out any checks for this money in the name of the "Very Reverend Chancellor."

To make a long, and to me, at least, most cruel story as short as possible, I shall say only that I meekly endeavored to counter his prohibition of all further writing with a word-picture of the situation with which I had so long confronted, and with a reminder of how long and hard I had worked day and night, sick or well, to improve it. I tried to give some idea of how encouraged most of our Catholic people had become; how they had at last taken on a real lease on spiritual life and were most heroically laboring for and giving—few and mostly poor as they were—so much of the little they possessed toward that fund for a school and a real church, which they sorely felt the need of at last.

God, the omniscient God alone knows how I tried and tried to picture clearly and movingly the simply paralyzing, the absolutely catastrophic effects which his prohibition of my further writing would, and just must have, not only upon the spirits and the immortal souls of those poor, long and most pitifully neglected Catholic people in my care, but must also have upon the future of the whole Catholic Church in all of those eight thousand square miles or more of that vast parish of mine in which almost all else except the Catholic Church seemed to flourish, and which he himself had told me that he wanted me to do all in my power to improve.

For a few and all too brief moments he appeared to be somewhat impressed by my presentation of these facts. It was only about a minute and a half, though, of silence before he began to sway from side to side as though uncomfortable in that chair, and to most tightly clinch all of his fingers and then to raise his right hand high above his head. And it was but a short time before he brought

down that fist with a resounding thud upon his desk and toward me.

With that, and with a rather deeply crimsoned face he told me clearly, bluntly and most emphatically, that souls or no souls, future or no future of the Church in that vicinity he just wanted me to understand once and for all that "that writing" of mine "in the papers" had to stop! "Stop!!" "Stop!!!" he shouted right into my right ear—and then asked me if I heard and understood!

I had heard; and I did understand; but I had the temerity to ask, but to ask with an ill-concealed quaver. if he really meant, if he actually could mean what he had said about those souls, those poor, immortal souls, and among them almost one hundred of the best and sweetest children I have ever known. I felt much like asking him, too, whether the future of the Catholic Church and all of its possible prestige there were just to be offered up as a holocaust upon the altar of his ambitions too—but I didn't do it.

My only reply from "His Lordship" in answer to my question as to the best and least harmful way to mention to my people his edict was that I must "just shut up" and by all means not to breathe a word of what he really had said, or things would go worse than ill with me—as God knows they have gone ever since.

If my people grew restless and inquisitive when I quit writing and advertising and thus making money, and when I told them nothing about the cause, I was just to have an architect "to draw a picture" of a nice church and school and hang that in the vestibule of our miniature "church" where, I was told, it would keep them "interested and quiet for years." This I have never had the heart to do, by the way.

Neither have I ever had the heart to tell them before

the real truth about their own Bishop and how frightfully all of that affected my health and almost everything else of mine whilst some of them, and most conspicuous among them, that woman before mentioned, attributed my pitiful decline to something so very different. My reasons for not daring then to mention this to the poor souls in my care were that I felt I still owed loyalty to that Bishop just because he was my Bishop, but above all because I, at that time feared that I might be the cause of more than one of my poor people's losing their faith; that Catholic faith which is the most valuable and consoling possession of a "good" Catholic all through life, and his mainstay at the hour of death. Hence I kept my secret well, but at the expense of reputation, and almost even of life itself, especially at the hands of the before mentioned woman and her "friend," and others under their influence, as will be seen later. My people will first learn of all of these things from this book—if their priests will ever allow them to read it in this free country of ours.

After telling me about that "picture of a school and a church" "His Lordship" arose rather suddenly, and with a very abrupt and emphatic gesture pointed toward the door. He, however, somewhat rapidly preceded me to that door, and after opening it quietly and looking around intently for a few moments returned towards his desk.

To say that I was amazed, dumfounded—utterly crushed and paralyzed for a while, and that everything was in a swim with me—would be but very mildly and most vainly trying to express the to me, at any rate, inexpressible after my seance with that Bishop of mine, my immediate superior under God Himself, as I used to believe. To say that I remained so for a considerable time after would be telling less than half of the truth.

After such horrible things I became more like the blighted and withered branch of a tree. However, I still tried to function for a while as I once did when animated with the life-giving sap of Faith—faith in priests and bishops as well as in the Catholic Church.

Had someone struck me a most violent blow upon the head; had some powerful and speedy poison been administered to me to paralyze almost utterly in me every organ or faculty of body or of mind when that Bishop finally spoke to me as he did; and had my heart been stimulated to the bursting-point and leapt from its cavity and exploded into a million parts I don't think I could have felt worse. I became sick—oh! so sick! I, I was nauseated to the extreme. My head was in a whirl and hurt terribly. Just why I did not have a stroke of apoplexy or fall down dead then only the omniscient Creator knows.

True, I was bidden to go—to get out! But where, where now? I felt like I wanted to go and to go somewhere—but where? On my way downstairs I met a priest. He seemed to have been waiting—just waiting, for some reason. Him I did not even look squarely at, much less speak to. I couldn't. Perhaps I couldn't because I had unconsciously begun to hate priests; some priests at least—and the “money-grubbers”; and the “climb-at-any-cost” ones among them I hated most, and with real venom.

Now, it seemed to me, all of my zeal, all of my labors, all of my rather keen suffering for souls—immortal souls—and for the gain of the Catholic Church—now all of these and so many other things were to be trampled and utterly crushed under foot just and only because some priests wanted more money, and a bishop wanted to rise higher. “Great God!—Great God!!” I asked myself, “is

that all, is that really and truly *all* that there is in the priesthood—and in the “Roman Catholic” Church, whose fruit the priesthood and priests are?” And then my last state was indeed worse than the first.

CHAPTER XVI

A FALLING "CHRIST"

Just how I got back home from the office of that Bishop I do not now really know. I do know, though, that in spite of the shocked condition and the daze I was in I did get back. I got back more dead than alive though—and more dead in soul and in Faith than I was even in body. Though worse than fatigued, I could not, I just could not sleep or even rest when I returned.

Moreover every organ of my body, and especially those of digestion and elimination appeared to have been just paralyzed. There were some things though which were not paralyzed; and these were my nerves. Those nerves were alive and active. They were rebellious. They were on a "rampage."

All, all I could do ^{as} was to feel, and to think, and to remember—and to tremble as chill after chill, sickening, and ever more sickening chill, in seemingly endless, endless successions crept over me and shook my whole long frame convulsively.

Think! Think! Think! My God! What a terrible, what a frightful thing is thought at a time like that! And how I longed, how I craved for some, some way to wipe out all power of thought and of memory just then—and to wipe them out completely, and forever, even!

But to wipe out those things I was utterly unable. Worse yet, I could do nothing else except to remember and to think—and to remember and to think and think of the conduct of those priests and of that Bishop and of

its influence upon me and my most precious Faith and that of so many others in whom I was so deeply interested.

"That man, from whom I had so recently come was a Roman Catholic Bishop—and my Bishop!" I said to myself often as I rolled around and around upon my bed so vainly trying to compose myself and to rest. That Bishop was a being to whom priest and layman were to look up as to the finger of the great God Himself. Moreover that Bishop had been the head of a world-famous college in Rome, in Rome, Italy, the very home of the Pope himself. In that college young men are trained for the priesthood. Hence that Bishop had been, so to speak, a maker of priests!

Besides all of that that Bishop had been the head of a great Catholic University in these United States, and he had held several other positions of importance in the Catholic Church. He had, even, if I have been correctly informed, been known in his time as "the Pope's own boy."

If any man, then, it seemed to me knew well, or ought very well to know just how much or how little, and just exactly what there really is in the "Roman Catholic" priesthood and in the episcopacy, to say nothing of the real value of human souls and the advancement of the Kingdom of God among the most needy of them by means of a school or a church—if any man knew or could know all of that, and more, then it seemed to me that that man was—that Bishop! And if he did not know, then why had he been appointed to and been allowed to hold such positions of trust—and just why was he holding his present one? I asked myself over and over again.

Now, if that man, I further asked myself—if that man, that Bishop, that Bishop appointed by the Pope of Rome

himself could just sit back and tell me such things—what then? If he could thus deliberately tell me that whilst he of course “regretted the worse than paralyzing effect” of his prohibition of further activities on my part along certain lines would have upon all of those souls, and especially upon the souls of so many of the sweetest and dearest children upon earth, to say nothing of the future of the Church there in my vast and almost untouched territory—if he could tell me that in spite of all of this my quite successful labors must cease—then what?

Without boasting too much I trust that I may say that my poor efforts had, among other things, yielded money enough to renovate that miniature “church” in the city of —— where I made my home. They had, too, enabled me practically to rebuild the Rectory there and to furnish it decently. In addition to all of that I was not only largely instrumental in building and paying for two new country mission chapels; but I had paid for \$6,100.00 worth of real estate for school and church—and I had a cash balance, or its equivalent in notes payable on demand or in those stocks or bonds of \$50,000.00. Of all of this I may remark again I had never offered that Bishop one cent in the shape of a “rake-off.”

This publicity and money-getting work was entirely a side line with me, moreover, and in no way interfered with my regular duties as pastor, though they often made me lose a night’s sleep in keeping up with the vast correspondence which they entailed. For some time all of this had put real life into the souls in my care. The way in which my people and their children attended church and Sunday-school, and the manner in which they slaved and sacrificed themselves and their time and their labor to give or to make money for that proposed school and that church is proof positive of the new life then in them.

Now if such a man as my own Bishop could, after all of that, thus sit back, and with real justice tell me in effect just to quit, and to let all of those precious (?) souls, along with the future of the Church in that vast and vastly promising section larger than the entire state of New Jersey just go on down to Hades, but to be sure that I did nothing more to show up in cold print the true conditions where I labored and thus lay him open further to possible charges of "maladministration of the diocese" (and thus interfere may be with his ambitions to become an arch-bishop)—then what?

Yes, then what? Then what in the name of that same Hades is there really in the "Roman Catholic" priesthood and its episcopacy any way? I most seriously and often asked myself, as I tossed and tossed around upon that bed—and my God! My Great God!! What in the name of something far worse than Hades and of old Pluto himself had I been fool, fool, infernal fool enough ever to have wanted to become a priest, and to have my most precious ideals shattered thus for? Yea—and what in the name of all of the demons in Hell and elsewhere did I want now to remain a priest for?

All of these and far worse thoughts and questions just came and came to plague me most horribly and alarmingly. One effect of them all was to cause me to recall everything I had ever heard from fellow-priests—from fellow-priests, mind before I ceased to mingle much with them—about all of the rottenness and the chicanery that there is in the priesthood, and how low some will stoop, and what else they will do, to become bishops, or at least to become "monsignoirs," or pastors of churches with large "revenues," and then to wear the purple, if nothing more.

I just could not then help thinking and thinking, too.

as I lay there in such misery, of how many priests I had heard of, particularly through my rather immense correspondence brought on by that advertising, who had once been poor, but who were now rich, and rolling around in limousines, or taking expensive trips to renowned resorts or "cures" in this country and abroad, whilst "assistants" and others were doing much if not most of their work. And just in passing I may remark that it is possible that more than one reader of this book has known such priests and has perhaps wondered "how they get that way." since there must be a cause somewhere.

There is something in our poor human nature which in times of great stress or distress helps us to bear up better if we can have a really trustworthy, wise and sympathetic confidant to whom we can tell all, and who will at least say a kind word if he can do no more. But what kind of a confidant could I then have? To a layman I just could not go without grave fear of injuring his most precious Faith; and to a fellow-priest I would not go. I knew only too well what ridicule and scorn if not actual contempt would be in store for me from that source.

Pray? Pray I could not—I just could not. I could pray no, no more! From the moment in which that Bishop had finished speaking to me to the present the very thought of prayer for myself, at least, just freezes my brain. What was I to do? I knew not. I know not.

Though I tried and tried so hard and most pitifully to lift up my mind and heart to my God from out of those most frightful and most hideous depths of thought, I could not. I just could not. As soon as at all possible I endeavored to pull myself together and to go about my ordinary duties as a pastor of souls—but I failed, and failed badly. And not only I failed, but my health

failed. Everything just seemed then to fail and to fail with me.

In less than a month after I had returned from my last trip to that Bishop I was in a hospital, and I had been operated upon for gall-sac trouble. It seems that that organ, or receptacle, rather, known as the gall-sac had enlarged five and one-half times, that it had become badly abscessed, and that it had to be removed. Poor thing! I wonder if it just became discouraged in trying to hold all of the bitterness of my life then!

In an evil day, and before I had been operated upon, and when suffering intensely from intestinal trouble along with others, a reputable physician suggested that I take a dose of paregoric and bismuth from time to time. From this medicine I received temporary relief, and even temporary "surcease of sorrow"—but only when taken in ever increased doses. All of this, though, was but adding fuel to the fire, as I found myself beginning to crave that medicine and becoming less and less active and more and more emaciated until that operation.

For the first three days after that same operation I thought that I was suffering all of the agonies of the damned. But I did not begin to realize what genuine suffering is until the evening of the fifth day when, through the medium of an unwelcome visitor I heard that my before mentioned woman friend, and her "friend" had spread the report that my failing, and very rapidly failing health, especially during the past month had been due to—paregoric!

Defend myself then I could not without running the double risk of betraying my Bishop, and of weakening, if not causing the entire loss of Faith on the part of more than one. Hence, like the man with the seven devils instead of one, my last state was worse than the first.

Learning that, and so many other unpleasant things there upon that bed of pain and misery did not help me much; and all I could do was to keep quiet and to think and think! Among the other things, I thought of was the number of times I had been told by my fellow-priests during the few times I met them what a fool I was in slaving and sacrificing health and all else away down there, and most often all alone in that immense and long priest-abandoned parish of mine.

Before this time of pain and anguish in that hospital there in the town in which I had made my home for nine years I had considered myself a "Fool of God," if any kind of fool at all for wanting to, and for doing all of that. But now I looked upon myself as a very different kind of a fool for ever dreaming of such a thing.

Somehow as I lay and lay there hour after hour and day after day with so many Job's comforters coming to see me I began to realize more and more what a fool I had been in wearing myself out as I had. I had for years deemed it only true priestly zeal to go out weary and half ill even on Sunday afternoons after two Masses—and one a High Mass—and two sermons along with Sunday-school and other things in the morning, and then after traveling fifty miles by train and ten by wagon over rough roads in all kinds of weather, preach an hour and more at a little country mission church. Now I looked upon all of that, and especially upon the way I had to take my own food and to cook it myself and eat it on these trips as far worse than folly.

Just how many other things I then thought of I cannot now recall. I do recall though that in some manner I got to thinking of "benefices." That might have been caused by the fact that I was not in a Catholic hospital with the good sisters around me. I wondered how many

“good” Catholics—and above all how many of those simple and humble sisters—really know what a “benefice” is, even if they ever heard of one.

How many of these good pious souls knew, I wondered, that certain “Roman Catholic” institutions which make money are actually at times set aside by high Church authority as “benefices,” and that a large share, if not all, of their cash profits go to certain church dignitaries as their “revenues from a benefice.”

Again I wondered just how many of those hard-working sisters—those “devout slaves of Christ”—knew whether the institutions in which they gave their all in this world and really slaved as no Negro slave has ever done—I wondered how many of them knew whether their institutions were “benefices,” and whether they were not rather slaves of some big, fat wealthy “Other Christ” of a priest than of Christ Himself; financially, at least.

Not many of them knew this for certain, I felt sure; unless it were the Superiors—the good “Mother-Superiors.” The rest were doubtless kept too busy most of the time working and “slaving for Christ,” and their minds were so fully and most systematically fed and stuffed up on “spiritual reading and meditation” with no “worldly reading” to offset all this that their physical and mental energies were too much absorbed thus for them to do much thinking about “benefices.” Quite likely some of these poor souls would not get much of a chance even to look up that matter in so pro-Catholic a work as the Catholic Encyclopedia, either.

Would it not be a wise thing for Society if the civil government were to step right in, I wondered, and required those in charge of every money-making Catholic institution to state publicly under oath in the newspapers who the real owners are; just how much REAL PROFIT the

institution makes each year, and by means of donations and bequests as well as by earned income—and who, just exactly who (what particular individuals) get all of that money or any part of it. Might all of this not make a decided difference in the income-tax of certain priests and others—and would it not be an eye-opener perhaps to many good, pious and generous Catholics, if to no one else?

Would it not be a good thing for the Country I wondered moreover if a rather careful, widespread and incisive examination were to be made into the titles of ownership of all Catholic “church-properties” to learn whether they are really church property or not; and if so, whether they are held in the names of particular bishops when the laws of certain states require them to be held in the names of lay trustees and others.

If they are or have ever been illegally held by some bishops and other superiors, and especially so held that these same bishops and others might the better hold the financial “whip-hand” over their priests, brothers and sisters as well as over the laity—what then is the real legal status of all of that vast property, and of those same bishops and others holding it?

Would it or would it not be well for Society also if the Superiors of convents, monasteries, etc., were to be compelled by stringent and well and thoroughly executed laws to give really exact and sworn-to copies of the rules and regulations and absolutely true accounts of the actual practices inside of such institutions and out by means of which men and women, and especially young men and women are gotten into and held by moral if not physical force in such institutions which flourish right in the midst of these free and independent United States of America?

All of these and many other questions, not a few of them unprintable, even here, kept surging and surging in my mind until I succeeded by one mighty effort in quelling them—and then began convalescence. As soon as I was at all able I tried to return to my usual work. Whatever I did though just tired and disgusted me, and I wondered how I could ever have been fool enough to like such work—such slavery and rot.

But what to do—what to do?—that was the question. Such hypocrisy, such a farce on my part of trying to pretend to be what I no longer possibly was able to be just could not go on forever, or even long. But what to do? Several things were possible, but not one of them could I even dream of without fear and trembling. One of the worst of these things was to die—and by my own hand! That, however, held out but a very fleeting moment's temptation, and chiefly because it would play right into the hands of my very worst enemies.

But what to do? Love for the priesthood and even of my Faith seemed dead—most barbarously murdered, and murdered by my own Bishop and others! There was, then, only one thing left that I could see; and that was to fall out forever from the ranks of the "Other Christs," and try to shift for myself in the world, even though I would be burdened with the stigma of a "fallen Christ."

CHAPTER XVII

A FALLEN "CHRIST"

In really enticing them into its priesthood, and into its orders and societies, and in holding fast to its subjects therein, and especially its "revenue-producing" subjects in the shape of simple and invertebrate priests, sisters and brothers, as well as in always and everywhere making it appear that it is not at all doing these very things, but on the contrary, is putting obstacles into the way of the enticed, the ways and the wiles of some agencies of the "Roman Catholic" Church might, like those of the cunning and mysterious Chinaman, seem many and devious—and usually most successful.

First, for example, there is the too often quite well concealed appeal made among the young, the idealistic and the talented young, to the romance, the mere romance of becoming a priest, a brother or a sister. In the eyes of most of the simple and uninitiated Catholics those particular states of life seem the really ideal ones.

For those not so young there is the rather adroit appeal to what is perhaps one of, if not the strongest cravings of human nature—the craving to be happy, really happy. In effect this trick or argument might seem to work something like this: Nobody is really or long happy in the "World"—and by the "World" here is meant practically everywhere outside of the places of abode or labor of Roman Catholic priests, brothers and sisters—*i. e.*, convents, monasteries, rectories, etc. Therefore get out of the "World" by becoming a priest brother or sister and—you'll "be happy then," perhaps!

Once the subject is really hooked—"poor fish!"—there is usually great rejoicing in his family circle and elsewhere; and that family is at once raised in dignity in the eyes of "the faithful." Good, simple, pious Catholics everywhere have long and well, and even unconsciously, been taught by the priesthood and its agencies to be glad, and even to rejoice greatly when a member of the family, or even a friend "enters religion," or becomes a priest, brother or sister.

But once the trap is successfully sprung, and the victim safely clutched within, it is too often all over with that same poor victim as far as the "World" is concerned; and regardless of just how long and completely, and of how intentionally the miserable wretch has been deceived, as well as of what a Hell on earth his or her new state of life may really be to the unsuspecting.

For to whom can the poor, deluded and miserable creature go for real consolation or real relief. To a "Superior" in religion most certainly not. He or she just would and could not well be a "Superior" if a kindly and really sympathetic ear, and the proper advice were always given—and moreover convents, monasteries, etc., might soon be almost empty of all except the incurable morons therein.

To leave, or even to hint at "leaving religion," or to pull out from any or all of the abject slavery of some forms of "religion" is, in the eyes of too many of the long and carefully trained pious, if not very intelligent or knowing Catholic laity, a most hideous and a most foully stigmatizing thing, not only for the one who has the moral courage to leave, but too often for all of his or her family—and most particularly is this so if the one who finally leaves happens to be a priest.

All this is and must be so thus really and more readily

and effectively to coerce where persuasion fails. But you just could not get one in a million of "good" Catholics to believe that. In fact, you could not get many of such people to believe this even if you convinced them of it most clearly and forcibly, such has been the long and powerful effect of the priesthood upon them.

Among such people the priesthood and the religious orders, and above all their superiors are right. They are and must always and everywhere be right—whether they are or not. Is not a priest really "Another Christ"? Is not Christ really God? Is not the word of God infallible? Therefore, the hapless victim just must always be wrong.

As a proof they point to the large number of priests, brothers and sisters who "stick." As well might they point to the large number of prisoners in our jails, and particularly in our penitentiaries, who, too, "stick," and who do not "desert" the jail—and the penitentiary prisoners have only mere physical coercion to keep them in. With those "religious," though, there is, and especially, for a really refined and sensitive, but still independent and intelligent soul a far, far worse, and inexpressibly worse, form of coercion. There is a coercion of the spirit by means long and carefully calculated by the most crafty institution upon earth to hold, and to break, and to crush that spirit if it cannot be bent to its own ways.

One of the forms of that coercion may be the fear instilled into the hapless victim who threatens to desert—or even faintly hints at it. He may be told that he will be an abject and most miserable failure in that same "World" into which his own Creator put him—and from which "religion" took him; and thus estranged him from the ways of that "World," even if he has ever known them.

There is often, and thanks to "religion," no place for such a one in the "World." By the good Catholic lay world such a creature is frequently completely ostracised—and most completely ostracised if he be a priest; and too often more so than a fallen woman of the world might be.

There is all too often no room for such a one even in his own former home. Home is more than once closed most tightly to him. He has "disgraced" that home. Even mother's heart—a "good Catholic" mother's heart—may be turned away if she survives the first shock. And father's heart—father's good Catholic heart—that is too often sulphuric and indescribable. Long used to being sheltered, fed and clothed by others, the "deserter" will find himself hard put to do these things for himself. Possibly he will be unable to do them honestly and honorably, and keep out of jail, which jail may be pictured as worse than the place he is in. To dig he is not able. To beg (and especially after he ceases to be a priest) he is ashamed. To steal he is afraid; but he might soon have to come to it (after his experience with "religion").

Therefore it is by far best—for the priesthood, at least—for the poor, deluded wretch just very quietly and uncomplainingly to make the most of the bad bargain of a wrecked life and "stay in religion," and to feed his mind up to the point of oblivion to all else on "spiritual reading," the "office" and other things, and then to wear a pious, holy, sweet and resigned face with it all—and wait and wait through long, long years for relief in the Kingdom to Come! Perhaps the reader has more than once seen the face of such a one and wondered at that expression upon it.

Where the picture and the threat of all of these and

the before mentioned evils in the "World" here so very inadequately referred to by my poor weak pen fail to check a real man still possessed of an unbroken spirit, another form of punishment in the shape of "disgrace" far worse than the others is hinted at—far worse at least in the eyes of the ignorant. The keynote of this "awful disgrace" is found in that well-known French expression "Cherchez la Femme"—"look for the woman," the woman in the case.

It might seem that the reasoning behind this atrocious "disgrace" is that ordinarily no man could possibly stand up like a man, and like a real man face and successfully combat the "World," and Devil of the priesthood and all their imps, unless he be held together and held up by the tender and the encouraging, and the all-powerful love of a real and a true woman—and a true woman who knows all, and is willing to endure for him all—and knows just what and how to do it.

Hence even to hint at breaking away from an unendurable life in the priesthood, and doing so in spite of all of the restraints and coercion therein, might seem, in the eyes of all of those good and superior pious "Other Christs" and others, to be an absolute indication of the guilt of the "heinous crime" of being honestly enamoured of a woman, and to deserve any and every kind of punishment possible then and thereafter. And I would ask my reader kindly to note those words "honestly enamored." They will have their significance later when dealing with priests and women.

Few priests, and fewer still of "good" Catholic laymen, will or can ever forgive me for making known here what I have. In their eyes, or in the eyes of the priests, at least, it might seem that IT IS NOT THE TRUTH of these and other things, BUT THE TELLING, the publishing of the

truth THAT HURTS and must be by all means prevented or followed up most carefully and most severely punished to the very end, since such truths could only be told by the worst and most loathsome of beings—a fallen priest, a fallen “Other Christ.” Ample proof or disproof of this assertion may be found in the very attitude of the priesthood toward this book and its circulation among the “Roman Catholic” laity—and in my fate at its hands. These things may form an interesting and very informative study of the real extent of the domination of the priesthood in these free United States of America for those who are interested enough in the subject of real freedom and other things to observe closely, and to get others to observe very closely, and to make that study. They may then learn whether “Roman Catholics” have to dance just as the priesthood fiddles—especially in matters pertaining to a “Fallen Christ,” if not to those who may be candidates for public and very responsible offices.



THE AUTHOR AS THE "FALLEN CHRIST"

CHAPTER XVIII
H
CHERCEZ LA FEMME
A

Whatever might or might not have been true in the cases of the much anathematized "Other Christs" who have from time to time possessed stiff enough vertebrae to pull out from the to them worse than Hellish slavery and hypocrisy of the priesthood, it is a clearly and very easily demonstrable fact that I, at least, have never been much of a "ladies' man." I was not even thus in the days of my very innocent youth in the newspaper game, when I might, with due propriety, have been. And more than once then did I have to cover the cases of some interesting specimens of the female sex. That is, of course, I meant that their cases were interesting.

I wanted to, and I craved too much to become a priest in those days to dare to let my mind dwell upon women, *and especially upon a woman*. I somehow had a powerful idea then that priests and women were diametrically opposed, and that the mere thought of women, or of a particular woman, ought to be further away from a priest's, or from even a would-be priest's mind, than are the antipodes from where I now write.

Hence I did not then presume to do very much more than to think of a female, and especially of the species known as "pretty," as much or anything more than a sometimes necessary evil, even if she were not exactly always and everywhere, and at best, "a rag and a bone and a hank of hair," and not always, too, "more deadly than the male"—especially deadly where aspirations to the "holy priesthood" were concerned.

But now just exactly what the future in the "World" has in store for me with regard to women or a woman or anything else is rather problematical. Though tall and rather well built, and said not to be exactly ugly I am not precisely a "spring chicken" any more. Long years have sprinkled my once black hair rather profusely with grey, too. Moreover I lack practically all of the social graces and am—just my own natural or unnatural self.

There is one thing which is quite certain in my case, though, and that one thing is that if there is ever any "looking" in connection with a woman in it, the woman will have to do no little of the looking, as well as several other things. However, if it ever becomes necessary for me to have a "housekeeper" I might not, if real need be, perhaps seem too averse to giving that "housekeeper" a lawful title, and to making her position really legal and honorable in the eyes of my Protestant friends, if not to Catholics. I could not then enjoy the privilege of living alone with an unattached female—and get by with it safely and respectably. I shall not then be able to live like a Catholic priest and enjoy many of the prerogatives of that particular caste any more.

In theory, at least, you see, there ought to be a very respectful distance between a priest and a woman. It might seem, in fact, that there ought to be, too, something more or less akin to enmity between priest and woman; and even like unto that between Eve and the serpent after Paradise—and in one certain way in particular. In practice, in actual practice—well, there might, in some, if not all, cases, seem remotely, at least, to be a somewhat different thing. It could appear that in actual practice the rule might be somewhat honored in the breech as well as in the observance. It might seem even, that if certain priests remain "faithful" and do not

“desert” the priesthood that that same priesthood and its agencies can and will, hood-like, and perhaps like the cloak of charity, cover some, even if not a multitude of the sins of a priest with a woman, or with women; and do it thoroughly.

In fact, and in very patently demonstrable fact, and very contrary to the belief of so many Catholics who are worse than ignorant on many things connected with the priesthood, not only some, but actually all of the sins of priests with women can be “absolved” or forgiven, and some very easily “forgiven,” by a fellow priest, who, when he cannot do so by means of his ordinary “faculties” or powers can obtain special “faculties” from the Bishop or even from the Pope himself.

All of the foregoing applies to the sins of fornication, adultery, procuring abortion, sodomy, soliciting females in the confessional, and even to the priest attempting to absolve his “complex” or companion in sexual sin. The woman in the last named case must, however, go to the humiliating bother of confessing and of being absolved, upon most occasions, at least, by some priest other than the one with whom she sinned—a rather interesting way, it might seem, of putting another priest wise to her weakness, and of possibly having another one after her on account of that same weakness!

Now, if anyone doubt all of this and more here unmentionable, and especially if he be a good but intelligent and fairly well educated Catholic, and knows a little Latin, just let him consult some official textbooks on “Roman Catholic” Moral Theology—immoral theology, we used to call it in my student days. Let him look up and study these and kindred subjects in the works of such standard and renowned Catholic theologians as Noldin, Sabetti, A. Tanquerey and Slater, for example.

Any or all of these and like books are sold by several of the larger Catholic publishing houses and are clearly listed in their catalogues of theological works. But let the interested reader be sure to look them up in Moral Theology and not in Dogmatic Theology. The subject matter referred to will generally be found under the heading of "De Sexto," "De Casibus Reservatis," and of "De Casibus Specialiter Reservatis."

In all of the works on Catholic Moral Theology that I have so far seen, and even in the English translation of Slater, the matter pertaining to sexual sins, and even *sexual sins committed by priests* is, presumably, for the sake of the more ignorant Catholic laity, put into Latin. This Latin is, though, I must say, not very difficult to read. Most certainly it never seemed so to all of the clerical students whom I have ever met.

More than once, and especially during very recent years, have I wondered whether these provisions of Catholic Moral Theology and of Canon Law are not well and rather cunningly designed to keep too many priests from leaving the priesthood when the "stimulus carnis," or the "sting of the flesh," becomes too much for them. Priests are by no means, as I have elsewhere remarked, physically denaturized either before or after entering the priesthood. Hence they may be all too human if not too careful, since they lack, or should lack, as priests, the ordinary natural and legitimate concomitants of that "sting" implanted by the Creator Himself.

The mere fact and the very fact that there are such teachings and such rules and provisions, and the undeniable fact that all these and others are so very clearly set forth in standard text-books of Catholic Moral Theology and of Canon Law ought to be significant to any really intelligent person, Catholic or non-Catholic. Just as

significant if not more so ought to be the fact that such standard text-books are in daily use in the Catholic seminaries of this country in which the future "Other Christs" are in the process of incubation.

None the less significant is the fact that Rome, cunning, crafty, long-experienced and world-wise Rome, has long seen fit to teach these doctrines and make these rules known so that her priests, at least, may know just what to do when the "sting of the flesh" has been too strong for them, and how best and most easily they can obtain absolution for any sin with any woman.

But what "good" Catholic wants to know these and other things? Not many seem to care to know even that they exist, much less to have any idea of how often they are put into practice; and merely to hint at them is often enough a signal for trouble from very good but not too well informed Catholics.

CHAPTER XIX

"AU REVOIR"

One of the most difficult of all things for me to do is to say "good-bye"; and especially to say it to a real and to a very dear friend. But since I shall now so soon have to bring this first and crude attempt at a book to a close I feel that even if I do not write those to me sad, so sad, words, I just must step out of my pages a bit, as it were, and try to express my gratitude to you, my dear reader, for buying and for reading my book thus far. And how I wish, how I do wish, I could tell you what a real and a great and an encouraging help you have been to me—and what real and very great help your further encouragement will be to me now that I am back in that great and wonderful "World" into which my Creator put me, and from which the lure of "religion" so long took me and held me.

True, I shall now have to live upon books alone, or upon my precarious income from them, if I am to live or even to exist honestly and honorably in that great big "World" with all of its uncertainties and newness to me after thirty years of absence from it in a way in college, seminary and in the priesthood. For that reason I shall most naturally need friends, and generous friends, for my books, either to help me to get them out, or to circulate them widely.

However, books, bread and bare existence are one thing; but real and true friendship is quite another. And somehow, as I have written and written away upon this book during the long and quiet hours of an enforced

vacation taken for the benefit of my much enfeebled health, caused so largely by worry, disappointment and soul-depression; and as I have written and written away all alone and so very long and much in a quiet and lonely country place away from "the maddening crowd's ignoble strife"—somehow as I wrote and wrote I felt, my dear reader, that you were very near by, and that I could speak to you as I have never dared speak before to mere mortal.

So often, when much writing, and so much sad and heart-breaking writing, became worse than a weariness of the flesh; and when most often and again there has been so little to make "Weariness to forget his toil," but so much, so very much, to open wide "Those graves of memory, where sleep the joys of other years"—so often then, my dear reader, have I most vividly seen your loving and kindly face. And I imagined, as I went along, that I saw it smiling and smiling encouragement after encouragement—and I wondered if I was right in seeing there all of that most kind encouragement.

You did not see me, but I saw you—and I saw you most vividly and often. And I felt happy, so happy, at times, to think that there are at least some really kind and most sympathetic and helpful persons in the "World," even if I have met none where I have been so long.

You, my dear reader, seemed to understand, and to appreciate; and hence I could talk to you with my old pen most plainly; and heart to heart. Yet I have been too diffident to talk to you as fully as I would wish, and upon as many of the topics which I would wish. I just did not want to over do the thing the first time you and I met, and I did not dare to make you tired of me.

Should you be really interested in me yet, and should

this first humble effort of mine, with its simple and true story of a Fallen "Christ" poured right out from the depths of my deeply troubled heart meet with your full approval and that of all of the friends of yours whom you can possibly interest in it, and should you feel that you have received the full value of the purchase price of this book I may be encouraged to write another in which I believe you will be much more interested, even if it might make your very hair stand on end like the quills of the fretful porcupine. More things are done in the secrecy of the priesthood than are, may be, dreamed of in your philosophy—and they are rarely told outside, even most interesting as they are.

One great trouble, though, in the telling of these things is not only to get them into print, but to prove them absolutely. And this because they are all so craftily and well and completely covered up, and most vigilantly guarded by certain most secret and powerful elements of a more than cunning and long, long, experienced priesthood. These elements in the priesthood can do far more wonderful things than to make "good" Catholics believe that the moon is made of green cheese. They can get away with it all most successfully and most plausibly and all too often even with non-Catholics who profess loudly to have the best interests of their Country and their fellow-men at heart.

Hence in future books, like in this one, I may have, for obvious reasons, to be rather reticent about exact names and places, and to leave much of that for those who want to make a personal investigation; and this will not always be so very difficult, perhaps. My whereabouts all of these years have been no secret—on my part, at least—and my name has appeared many, many times in signed articles, as well as in advertisements in

at least a dozen Catholic papers. From all of these things no little circumstantial evidence and corroboration may be obtained by anyone interested enough to endeavor to procure it. No little which is not merely circumstantial may thus be obtained too. What others thus learn and give voice to will be of more value to me than if I were to present it myself.

So whilst I shall not now say good-bye, I must at least say "au revoir." Though you have never seen me whilst I have seen you and learned to esteem you so very highly; and though we may never meet in person, I most earnestly trust that we may meet soon again upon the pages of another book, and that I may there find you, my dear reader, as good and as cheering as I have found you here.

Now What Do You
Really Think
of
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of
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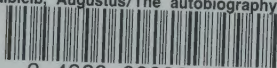
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